

**PKR ropes in ex-army chief in push for uniform votes**  
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**By Syed Jaymal Zahiid**

PETALING JAYA, March 6 — PKR announced today the admission of former army chief General Tan Sri Md Hashim Hussein, adding to its list of recent ex-military recruits seen as crucial in its bid to woo the support of armed forces personnel ahead of Election 2013.

The Pakatan Rakyat (PR) anchor party said recently it had set its sights on some 250,000 voters living in police barracks and military camps nationwide, hoping to capitalise on the influence of former military leaders who have joined its ranks.

“In my opinion, PR is more sincere and honest,” Md Hashim, the Malaysian Army’s 18th commander in chief, told a press conference at the PKR headquarters here when asked about his joining.

He was flanked by the party’s de facto leader and PR chief Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who is also a close friend from their student day at Malay College Kuala Kangsar (MCKK).

Md Hashim added that among the major factors that had moved him to join the opposition was the allegedly widespread corruption within the army, an oft-repeated accusation made by other retired army generals now members of opposition parties.

“If you look at the infrastructures belonging to the army, they are pathetic,” he said, adding that equipment supplied to the army was often inferior, which he blamed on corruption.

PKR deputy president Azmin Ali told The Malaysian Insider recently that the party aims to capitalise on the clout of these decorated officers to “educate” the military on issues that affect their livelihoods, such as the recent use of the Armed Forces Pension Fund (LTAT) to buy out a firm belonging to carpet dealer Deepak Jaikishan and Wanita Umno’s Raja Datuk Ropiaah Abdullah.

Top of the list of recent ex-military recruits is Royal Malaysian Air Force Brigadier-General (Rtd) Datuk Abdul Hadi Abdul Khattab, who joined the party in November 2011 and currently sits as PKR’s security committee chairman.

The party’s campaign for army votes, however, could be hampered by the Elections Commission’s recent announcement that parties are prohibited from canvassing in military camps and police barracks during Election 2013 due to their “security zone” status.

Barisan Nasional leaders still consider the armed forces and police a key vote bank for the coalition, citing the ruling government’s policies that have benefited the security forces.

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