

Stronger signs Najib's man will take over MCA's Wangsa Maju seat
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 5 — The signs are stronger that Umno will take over the Wangsa Maju seat from MCA by fielding Datuk Shafei Abdullah in Election 2013 as Barisan Nasional chairman and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak prepares to unveil the ruling coalition's candidates list soon.

Although Shafei refused to confirm this when approached by reporters here today, the political secretary to Najib gave the clearest signal yet when he said Umno was confident of grabbing the federal seat from its rivals with increased Malay support.

"The landscape in Wangsa Maju has changed since 2008..there is a four per cent increase in Malay votes," he told the media after attending Friday prayers with BN deputy chairman and Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin at a local surau in Wangsa Maju here.

The urban seat went to independent Wee Chee Keong in 2008 thanks to the split in Malay votes and strong Chinese support. Wee was with PKR then but had since defected to become a pro-BN independent MP.

Shafei said that by adding the increase in new voters, there are about 51-56 per cent Malay voters in the area.

"I'll say Umno is winnable," replied the BN Wangsa Maju division chief when asked if he felt his party or MCA would stand a bigger chance of recapturing the seat.

But Shafei was quick to note that it would be unfair for him to say MCA is the weaker party, saying that his opinion was purely personal and objective.

The Malaysian Insider had previously reported of a tussle between Umno and its senior ally MCA amid a vigorous effort by Pakatan Rakyat (PR) to keep the federal seat.

It is understood that the MCA's Datuk Yew Teong Lock is looking at running for the seat again but Shafei is said to be eyeing a chance to be the coalition's candidate with help from pro-Umno bloggers.

In Election 2008, PKR won the federal seat against Yew with a razor-thin majority of 150 votes, but lost the seat two years later when Wee quit the party in 2010 over dissatisfaction with the issue of sand theft in Selangor.

Wee was not the only one to leave, the party's previous division chief Datuk Mohd Zaid Ibrahim had also left, signalling a disquiet within the Wangsa Maju chapter that party workers blamed on the absence of a genuine and respected local leader.

The Malay community forms the largest voting group within the constituency with 35,258 voters (53.28 per cent), followed by the Chinese at 24,000 (36.27 per cent) and Indians at 5,741 (8.68 per cent).

Umno appears confident of winning the seat with Malay support but observers noted that with the demographic split into three camps - PKR, Umno and PAS - the Chinese votes could

decide who take Wangsa Maju.

The largest group of voters are those aged 30 to 49 years old at 45.68 per cent or 30,230, followed by those aged 50 to 69 years old at 31.66 per cent or 20,953.

Most stay in Wangsa Maju's residential areas that largely consist of medium-cost flats and condominiums.

PKR is likely to field its local youth chief, former Gerakan deputy minister Datuk Dr Tan Kee Kwong, the son of one of the country's most respected politicians, Tan Sri Tan Chee Koon.

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