

In Kajang, a hard act for Barisan to find Anwar's match, say analysts
Malaysian Insider
Feb 5, 2014
OLEH HASBULLAH AWANG CHIK

The difficulty in finding a credible candidate and its dismal track record since the 13th general election has prompted some political analysts to suggest that the Barisan Nasional (BN) sit out the upcoming Kajang by-election.

Universiti Teknologi Mara's Associate Professor Dr Shaharudin Badaruddin said the BN is finding it hard to get someone who could match the credentials of the former deputy prime minister and opposition leader.

"Do they have credible candidates who will be able to challenge Anwar's influence? The existing Umno leaders of standing are already either state assemblymen or MPs. So who in Selangor can take on Anwar?" he said.

He said the BN dilemma is not just about credible candidates, it is also about stature.

"Anwar is a man of international repute and was the deputy prime minister, and is still politically active internationally. BN would hit a snag in finding a candidate," he told The Malaysian Insider.

Shaharudin said it is better that BN stay away from the by-election while noting that the opposition was bound to bring price hikes and subsidy slashes into play while campaigning.

He said the temperature of the 13th general election last year had barely cooled, and the pro-PR sentiments of the Chinese electorate still remain.

Shaharudin said that putting an MCA man as the BN candidate in Kajang would work against the coalition as the Chinese would still support PR.

Prof Datuk Mohamad Abu Bakar, who lectures on International Relations at Universiti Malaya, said Umno and MCA are at loggerheads over the choice of the BN candidate.

He said apart from this, BN is also saddled with public outrage over price increases which have not been properly addressed.

He said with almost equal number of Malay and Chinese voters, both Umno and MCA are wrangling over which party deserves the seat.

This, coupled with the issue of rising cost of living, would only work to PR's advantage, said Mohamad.

Saying any decision will be problematic – whether on the issue of the candidate or on participating in the by-election – for BN, Mohamad said the coalition has to resort to bringing up PR's weaknesses.

"I don't see a solution," said Mohamad. "PR is aware of the BN's predicament. As such, BN's campaign will focus on Pakatan's weaknesses and wrongdoing," he said, suggesting a way out would be for BN to sit out the by-election.

Another political analyst, Dr Mohammad Agus Yusoff of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, said it was possible that the BN would pick a professional and someone who had no previous media exposure.

"Maybe they would put forward someone unknown from among the professionals. It is not fair to dismiss the MCA as having no candidate," Agus told The Malaysian Insider.

Agus believed that Umno would give way to an MCA candidate, adding that such a show of unity would go a long way in helping the BN candidate's chances at the by-election.

"Whatever the speculation is, BN will stick to its principle of cooperation.

"Umno lost in both the Pengkalan Chepa and Kota Bharu by-elections. Should we then let it contest again at these seats?

"It is the same with MCA (in Kajang). It is not fair that the matter is debated," said Agus.

Meanwhile, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim, said BN's candidate would come from either Umno, MCA or MIC, while claiming that things was not rosy in Pakatan Rakyat.

"Anwar's standing has suffered because the parties in PR do not see eye to eye. PAS and DAP are not satisfied. There are PKR elected representatives and leaders who are not happy with the resignation of the Kajang incumbent Lee Chin Cheh," he added.

Shahidan described by-elections as a "festival of sins" due to what he said was the proliferation of lies during campaigning.

"A by-election is a festival of major sins. Youngsters who take part in social festivals may indulge in sins.

"But a by-election has bigger sins because slandering others is considered more serious than murder," he said, adding that the campaign period is usually filled with political speeches and badmouthing which ignore all human courtesies.

Shahidan, who is a member of the Umno supreme council, said the Kajang by-election provides an opportunity for BN to gauge its strength on several issues pertaining to Selangor.

“In this by-election, voters are not looking at issues, but expect the government to tell them whether it can stabilise prices of goods and solve several major issues such as racial and religious tension,” he said.

Anwar is Pakatan Rakyat's Kajang by-election candidate after polls were triggered by the resignation of its assemblyman Lee Chin Cheh on January 27.

The Kajang state seat has 38,965 registered voters. Malays make up 48% of voters, Chinese 41%, Indian 10% and others 1%.

In the 2013 general election, PKR's Lee garnered 19,571 votes followed by Lee Ban Seng of the BN with 12,747 votes. Mohamad Ismail of Berjasa obtained 1,014 votes.

The three independent candidates who contested the seat were Mohd Iwan Jeffrey Abdul Majib (249 votes), Ong Yan Foo (85 votes) and Mohd Khalid Kassim (83 votes).

Lee won the seat with a comfortable 6,824-vote majority. – February 5, 201

Hakcipta © 2013 The Malaysian Insider

Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/in-kajang-a-hard-act-for-barisan-to-find-anwars-match-say-analysts>