

If not contesting Chempaka, don't contest Permatang Pauh either, PAS tells BN
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By Anisah Shukry

Barisan Nasional (BN) should be consistent in its arguments that by-elections are a waste of resources and forego contesting both the Chempaka and Permatang Pauh seats, a PAS leader said today.

PAS elections director Dr Mohd Hatta Ramli said this after the two seats were made vacant by Datuk Seri Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat's death and Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's incarceration, respectively.

He said BN had argued last year that the PKR-engineered Kajang by-election was a waste of money and a burden to the rakyat, and that such arguments were still valid.

"If their stance is consistent, then it's not just the issue of floods in Kelantan, but also the huge money to be spent, and how it will burden the rakyat," he told a press conference at the Lembah Pantai service centre in Kuala Lumpur today.

"(They also said) we just had the general election recently, so many of their arguments which they brought forward during the Kajang by-election should apply.

"So if they feel they should not contest in Chempaka, I believe they should think along the same lines when it comes to Permatang Pauh."

Chempaka is a seat in the Kelantan legislative assembly while Permatang Pauh is a parliamentary seat.

Both Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin and Kelantan Umno Liaison chairman Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed have said that BN need not contest in the Chempaka by-election, and should focus on the flood rehabilitation process in Kelantan instead, Bernama reported.

However, Khairy said he felt otherwise in the case of Permatang Pauh, and tweeted on Saturday that BN should contest the seat.

Dr Hatta said PAS was ready for the Chempaka by-election, adding that he believed the voters there would not forget Nik Aziz's contributions to the state constituency.

The Kuala Krai MP said PAS would also help PKR campaign in Permatang Pauh, once the Election Commission (EC) declared the seat vacant.

"We will be there. We have a state assemblyman in Permatang Pasir, so we have a duty to make sure the state constituency gives their full support to PKR.

"In Penanti and Seberang Jaya we also have a strong presence. We will make sure seat remains with PR until next election," said Dr Hatta, referring to the two other state seats within the Permatang Pauh federal constituency.

Meanwhile, the PAS senior leader ruled out the possibility that the individuals who had set fire to his car on Saturday were linked to a group of PAS members who had demonstrated against him on February 8.

"There is no link," he said, adding that he did not wish to speculate on the identity of the culprits.

Dr Hatta's four-wheel drive was set alight around 3.50am on Saturday outside his home in Hulu Klang by an unidentified man, according to a security guard on patrol.

Dr Hatta said that the police were investigating the case and had employed the forensic team and canine unit to trace the culprits.

"The police are also tracing the CCTV recordings of the neighbourhood. I have full trust they will catch the culprit," he said.

"The car is not severely burned and I'll be driving in it within the next week."

The demonstration against Dr Hatta on February 8 outside the PAS headquarters was led by Pahang PAS Youth chief Fadli Ahmad and included the state's ulama chief, Mokhtar Senik.

They accused him of masterminding a plot to unseat the Islamist party's president, Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang.

Dr Hatta has been closely identified with the "Erdogan" or progressive group within the party leadership, which is led by clerics. – February 16, 2015.

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