

Penang Harapan seat talks fail, presidential council to intervene
MalaysiaKini.com
23 Februari 2018

Penang Pakatan Harapan has yet to resolve six seats for the coming general elections, leaving the three component parties which face a deadlock in negotiations over them to surrender the matter to their national committee.

Penang has 40 seats up for grabs. DAP is the incumbent in 19 seats, PKR 10, Umno 10 and PAS 1.

DAP is off the hook as the status quo remains as far as the party is concerned. In 2008 and 2013, the party contested 19 seats and won all.

The six seats in dispute are mostly Malay-majority seats which are being eyed by PKR, Amanah and Bersatu.

These seats were contested by PKR in the 13th general election, but the party failed to capture them. PKR contested in 16 seats in 2013 and won 10.

The six disputed state seats are Bertam, Sungai Dua, Telok Ayer Tawar, Sungai Acheh, Pulau Betong and Telok Bahang.

After the deadlock in their negotiations, the component parties are now leaving it to their presidential council to decide on the matter.

Agreement only on 'minimal' number of seats

PKR Seberang Jaya assemblyperson Dr Afif Bahardin said the parties are only unable to agree on a "minimal" number of seats.

"These are to be decided by the presidential council. PKR is willing to share seats with Bersatu and Amanah," the Penang executive councillor told *Malaysiakini*.

"However, we would like to contest in some seats where we have done some groundwork, as we are confident of winning more seats this time around, even though we may be facing three-cornered fights," said Afif (*photo*), the PKR national Youth deputy chief.

Amanah state commissioner Mujahid Yusof Rawa said the party was looking forward to contesting in five state seats, which were previously contested by PAS.

Amanah feels it has a winning chance in these seats as the voters there were more likely to choose a Harapan candidate and that the PAS splinter party has been doing its groundwork in these areas since 2015.

Amanah was formed in 2015, after the PAS progressive wing, led by its former deputy president Mohamed Sabu, cited disagreements with the party leadership.

Permatang Pasir (currently held by PAS), Permatang Berangan (Umno), Penaga (Umno), Sungai Dua (Umno) and Bayan Lepas (Umno) are the seats Amanah seeks to contest, Mujahid (*photo*) said.

"Although we all have our demands and we feel that we should be more practical with the numbers. But we have not been able to come to a resolution, so we are surrendering the decision to our national committee," the Parit Buntar MP added.

Negotiations have reportedly come to a standstill as Bersatu wants to contest in all Umno seats.

Umno, which faces PAS and PKR, won 11 state seats in 2008 and 10 in 2013.

In response, Bersatu Penang chief Marzuki Yahya merely said: "No, we have not resolved our seat allocations yet. We will probably get it done by next week."

Marzuki (*photo*) declined to reveal the number of problematic seats or the locations when contacted by *Malaysiakini*, merely saying, "I need to consider our partners in Amanah and PKR as we are all in this together."

Harapan chairperson Dr Mahathir Mohamad has said that states that are unable to resolve their seat distributions by Friday (today) must let the presidential council decide on those seats.

Mahathir also said parliamentary seats in the state have been resolved but certain state seats have yet to be agreed upon by the parties.

On Penang Island, DAP will contest in the Bukit Bendera, Tanjong, Jelutong and Bukit Gelugor, while PKR will take the Bayan Baru and Balik Pulau parliamentary seats.

On the mainland in Seberang Perai, Amanah will contest in Kepala Batas, Bersatu in Tasek Gelugor, PKR in Permatang Pauh and Nibong Tebal and DAP in Bukit Mertajam, Batu Kawan and Bagan.

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Source: <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/413153>