

## **GE14: Big battle wages in little Perlis**

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PETALING JAYA: The tranquil state of Perlis may not remain so for long with Umno and PPBM trying to outdo each other to ensure support in the 14th general election (GE14).

The state, known for its picturesque padi fields and limestone hills, has always been an Umno stronghold but now PPBM is trying to muscle its way into the Barisan Nasional (BN) fort.

Perlis, the smallest state in Malaysia, has a population of almost 250,000 people with three parliamentary seats – Arau, Padang Besar and Kangar – and 15 state seats.

In the last election, PKR won Indera Kayangan by a 1,091-vote majority and PAS won Sanglang with a slim majority of 121 votes.

Perlis BN chairman Shahidan Kassim, who is Arau MP, said he was confident of winning the entire state, including the two state seats currently held by the opposition.

“We are ready for GE14. We are doing well in Perlis,” he told FMT.

Shahidan, the former Perlis menteri besar, had previously said BN candidates should meet the needs of the people.

He said Perlis' politics differed from that of other states, particularly big, developed states, as the people in Perlis wanted leaders who were approachable and cared about their concerns.

“Due to that, BN and Umno candidates should be those who have proven track records and who always stay in touch with the voters, not just appearing just before the general election.”

However, Perlis Pakatan Harapan (PH) chairman Amier Hassan said BN should be worried about the presence of the opposition pact in Perlis.

“BN cannot take all of Perlis any more. PH is likely to take three quarters of Perlis because there will be a swing in voters.

“That's because there is no confidence in Umno anymore. The younger generation wants development,” he told FMT.

Amier said people in Perlis had “woken from their slumber” and were questioning the lack of development in the state amid the rise in cost of living.

Ameir added that PH would help elevate the living standards of padi farmers and fishermen in the state.

“About 30% live in rural areas and need help while the remainder are businessmen and government servants.”

Ameir, whose family has been in Arau for seven generations, said if PH wins the election, it would also help develop the farming of the harum manis mangoes for which the state is famous.

“It can be a source of development. Even in Thailand, they are trying to plant harum manis like ours but they have failed so far.”

He added that the coalition would draw more foreign companies to invest in the state.

It would also focus on tourism as Perlis had a lot to offer, he said.

Perlis has 137,000 registered voters, the majority of whom are Malays.

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