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# BN gunning for polls victory

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**CONFIDENT:** Barisan Nasional wants to create an upset in the opposition stronghold

THE weather in Permatang Pauh is mostly scorching this time of the year, followed by the occasional gloom that brings the rain. But what is taking place in the heavens reflects the political clime beleaguering the opposition pact on the ground.

Barisan Nasional is keen on winning the parliamentary seat, regardless of the strained ties between PKR, Pas and DAP.

Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi is all sewn up to provide a victory unseen in previous by-elections, especially in opposition-held territories.

The man is confident that BN will create an upset in a constituency synonymous with the now-incarcerated Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

While many observers tend to cling on to the traditional perception that PKR will continue to retain the seat, several factors might explain Zahid's confidence.

In politics, exploiting the flaws of rivals is as essential as creating cracks through dents, and Pas assistant secretary-general Datuk Takiyuddin Hassan voiced concern over the political development in Permatang Pauh.

When contacted yesterday, Takiyuddin admitted that Permatang Pauh Pas's dissension could affect PKR's run for the seat, following protests against PKR president Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail's candidacy and PKR Youth's call for Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang to step down as Pas president over hudud.

Takiyuddin implored Pas election director Dr Hatta Ramli to address the matter as soon as possible as the party is a key player in the pact's

election machinery.

"Pas is a force to be reckoned with in the constituency. In the 1980s, Permatang Pauh was held by Pas until Anwar (at that time an Umno leader) won the seat in the election. Now, if we can't find a middle ground, it will become a huge stumbling block.

"Of course Pas will deploy the necessary assistance, but it (the protest) is a matter Dr Hatta must look into," said Takiyuddin.

There are three state seats under Permatang Pauh, whose electorate comprises 70 per cent Malays as of second quarter of 2014, followed by Chinese (23 per cent) and Indians (six per cent).

Pas, in providing an example on the division's strength, said the party won with a majority of 58.7 per cent or 6,826 votes in the Permatang Pasir state seat. But PKR only won the Seberang Jaya and Penanti state seats with a majority of 21.1 per cent (2,459 votes) and 20.2 per cent (2,339 votes), respectively.

The Pas-Pakatan row which is culminating in Permatang Pauh is an opportune moment for BN to extol its brand of politics, says analyst Dr Muhammad Fuad Othman.

Unresolved hudud controversy and elements of nepotism are said to be among the chief reasons for Dr Wan Azizah or anyone from Anwar's family to be rejected by Permatang Pauh Pas.

Even the local PKR division preferred to have former Balik Pulau parliamentarian Mohd Yusmadi Yusoff to be fielded instead.

"Pas' impending silent protest against the candidacy of PKR can ring the death knell for the opposition in Permatang Pauh. It is something that cannot be denied. I feel that BN is banking on the current political atmosphere, which is proving to affect PKR's machinery.

"Yes, BN can win although realistically put, with a small margin. The same goes with PKR, with the scales not tipping in its favour due to considerable infighting in Pakatan," said the Universiti Utara Malaysia political scientist.

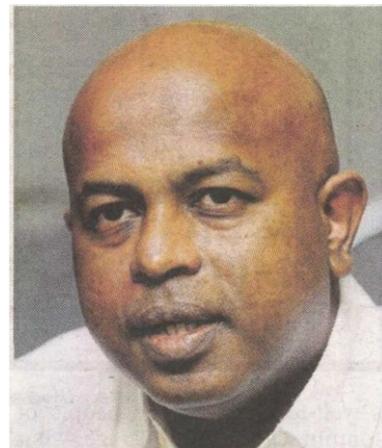
Universiti Sains Malaysia's Associate Professor Dr Sivamurugan Pandian suggested that even Pas' top leadership were at odds in lending a hand to PKR for its campaign, noting that the demonisation of Hadi held a long-term effect on the pact's politics.

"They are in a dilemma, with Permatang Pauh Pas suggesting a different candidate other than Dr Wan Azizah and the derision against Hadi. This will create a conflict during the campaigning period."

A PKR leader, who declined to be named, agreed that the prolonged debacle between the opposition parties would turn the by-election into an arduous affair. He said Pas played a huge role contributing to the majority won by Anwar, through the number of votes garnered for the Permatang Pasir state seat.

In the 13th General Election (GE13), Anwar polled a 11,721-vote majority for the seat against BN's Dr Mazlan Ismail and independent candidate Dr Abdullah Zawawi Samsudin.

"Our problem now revolves around the majority we held since GE13. While it has been dubbed as the most important by-election by the party since Kajang, we can foresee that it can be quite a task to regain the numbers due to current circumstances. The truth is, the pact is not united unlike before."



Associate Professor Dr Sivamurugan Pandian says Pas leaders may not go all out to help PKR campaign