

15 JAN 1996

Lipis-victory

BN VICTORY WITHOUT CONTEST SHOWS OPPOSITION IS BANKRUPT OF IDEAS

KUALA LIPIS, Jan 15 (Bernama) -- Amihamzah Ahmad, the Barisan Nasional candidate who was returned unopposed when nomination closed for the Lipis parliamentary by-election today, said the opposition was "bankrupt of ideas and they dared not face the ruling party."

He did not expect an easy victory, for he had earlier believed the opposition would be fielding two candidates.

"The opposition probably felt that they had no issue to raise, and as a result they did not want to field any candidate," he told reporters shortly after the announcement of his victory at the Kuala Lipis District Office here.

Amihamzah, 46, a businessman and Lipis Umno Division treasurer, thanked Umno President and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob for the support and confidence they had given him.

News of his victory brought gratifying comments from various party leaders with Khalil, one of the first to react, describing it as yet "another proof of the people's confidence" in the BN.

Khalil who is state Umno liaison chief said the victory was indeed the "best reward" for Dr Mahathir, his deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and the Pahang people.

The BN would receive a "bigger mandate" compared with the previous elections if it had gone to the poll on Jan 27, in view of the opposition's difficulty in gaining support against the BN which had strong grass-root support, he said.

Umno Vice President Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the victory, further consolidating the party position, was due to the confidence of the people in the party leadership, especially in the state.

Although initially several opposition parties stated they would not give an easy victory for the BN, they later decided against contesting when they saw no chances of winning.

Before nomination closed at 11am, the only would-be adversary, independent candidate S Selvarajoo a/l Kalliannan, 36, withdrew his nomination papers, and told the waiting reporters that he was declaring his firm support for the BN leadership under Khalil.

Selvarajoo who had given a Blue Valley address on the Cameron Highlands, said he had the intention to contest the seat earlier in view of the "many problems, such as land titles" in his area which need to be addressed, but decided to withdraw after a meeting with Khalil.

Kelantan Umno liaison chief Datuk Annuar Musa said the choice of Amihamzah, a local born, for the parliamentary constituency, was most apt since he would be in the best position to concentrate on development in the rural and the urban areas under his constituency.

Pahang MCA chief Datuk Lim Ah Lek in welcoming the victory said it was clear proof of the "undivided support" for the BN, adding that although there was no contest the government would fulfill its commitment to bring better living for the people, especially those in Lipis.

MIC deputy president Datuk S Subramaniam, sharing similar views stated that the BN was still required to rule with its excellent leadership style as it had earlier demonstrated.

In SHAH ALAM, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib congratulating Amihamzah on his unexpected win said the people had once

again given total support for the government to lead the nation to the "higher pinnacle" of glory.

Usually the opposition would seize upon the opportunity to field candidates in any by-election to stir up various issues. "However this time they realise the people are fully supporting the Barisan," he said.

In SEREMBAN, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamd Isa Abdul Samad said the victory was a "clear manifestation" of the people's confidence in the party.

Speaking to reporters after the earth-breaking ceremony for the Seremban City Centre project here, he said the opposition was now facing a dilemma.

Their position, especially those under the Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah led by PAS and the Semangat 46, was becoming "more shaky and untenable," he added. -- Bernama