

23/06/1998

Shahidan's brother is BN's man for Arau polls

KANGAR, Mon. - Arau Umno Youth chief Ismail Kassim was today named the Barisan Nasional candidate for the Arau parliamentary by-election.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim, who is also State BN and Umno chief, made the announcement at the Residency Hall near his official residence before dozens of party supporters.

The 38-year-old Ismail, a Universiti Pertanian Malaysia graduate, is Shahidan's younger brother.

He is presently senior manager I in Bernas Holdings, a position he would resign from, effective today.

He won the Youth chief post in the division headed by Shahidan over the past three years, in Umno elections held three months ago.

Asked on the possibility of Ismail's candidacy being exploited by the Opposition as further proof of nepotism and cronyism in Umno, Shahidan said he had nothing to do with the selection.

"The Arau division did recommend several names to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. But the final decision on the matter is entirely his," he added.

Shahidan said the BN machinery was ready to refute allegations the Opposition may level against it and the candidate.

Meanwhile, State Pas commissioner, Hashim Jasin, said lawyer Zulmi Sabri, 29, who runs his own legal firm here, is the party's most likely candidate.

"Zulmi is currently the State Pas Youth wing secretary," he added.

But the 59-year old Hashim said he and Arau division chief, Nordin Ahmad, 56, are also in the running.

The Arau seat fell vacant following the death of Kamaruddin Ahmad on May 25. The former magistrate contested on a BN ticket in the 1995 general election and won with a 6,929-vote majority.

The Election Commission has fixed Wednesday as the nomination day. In the event of a contest, polling will be held on July 4.

(END)