

26 NOV 1999

Election-Subang (News Focus)

BARISAN NASIONAL SET TO RETAIN SUBANG

By: R.Ravichandran

PETALING JAYA, Nov 26 (Bernama) -- While there are many hot seats in this general election, the Subang parliamentary seat here is no less exciting.

The contest in the constituency will be a one-to-one fight between the Barisan Nasional and Parti Keadilan Nasional (Keadilan).

The BN is represented by Tan Sri Dr K.S.Nijhar who is also the MIC secretary-general and Keadilan by its supreme council member and social activist, Irene Fernandez. Both are first timers.

The three state seats in Subang are Bukit Lanjan, Kelana Jaya and Subang Jaya. The electorate is made up of mainly businessmen, professionals, government servants, estate workers and squatters.

The total number of voters is 92,794 with Malays comprising 48.65 per cent, Chinese 32.62 per cent, Indians 18.51 per cent and others 0.22 per cent.

In the 1995 general election, the BN candidate, Datuk M.Mahalingam, won with a majority of 25,763 votes. Mahalingam polled 37,247 while Usulludin Jamil of the now defunct Parti Semangat 46 polled 11,484 votes.

For the Subang folk, the issues are more of traffic congestion and infrastructure development such as good roads, relocation of thousands of squatters, housing and floods.

Nijhar who is confident of retaining the seat for BN said he would try to solve the issues and others including more schools, public transport and a better market for the area.

"There are simple issues like repairing leaking pipes and better roads and drainage system, which have been overlooked in the past. This we can solve in a shorter time. But there are also things which we cannot solve overnight," he told Bernama.

Nijhar said the BN track record since independence spoke for itself especially in ensuring continuous progress, stability and religious freedom.

He said Subang voters which also comprised a lot of well-educated people would not risk their future and their children by voting the opposition.

"Opposition firebrand and high-charged politics will not work. Based from the response so far, the Subang voters will reject the opposition," said Nijhar who has once served as a parliamentary secretary and now run his own business. He is also a member of the National Economic Consultative Council.

On the other hand, Fernandez said while giving attention to local issues such as the need for a better market in Subang Jaya, her campaign focus was more on national issues such as injustices, mismanagement and issues related to Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"With the response given by the people and the solidarity of other parties in the Alternative Front, I am confident of winning," she said.

Fernandez is also banking her chances on issues such as squatter problems, in areas like Kampung Sungai Nipah which has seen many demonstrations lately, housing and the Malay votes.

But observers said that the BN chances to retain the Subang parliamentary seat and three seat seats are boosted by the good track record of its three previous assemblymen.

In Subang Jaya, incumbent Datuk Lee Hwa Beng, who is being challenged

by Ong Ing Siong of the DAP, is a well-known service-oriented leader while in Bukit Lanjan the good work done by former state assemblymen Dr Pius Martin especially the construction of thousands of low-cost houses in Sungai Buloh would boost the bid by BN newcomer Lum Weng Keong of the Gerakan, who is facing DAP's Saw Cheong Teng.

Lee has successfully fought for many things including for a new primary Chinese school, upgrading of Subang West interchange, approval to build access road from Glenmarie to Subang Jaya and upgrading of main roads in Subang Jaya and Bandar Sunway, all expected to bring big relief for the residents affected by traffic congestion.

In Kelana Jaya, while the BN candidate, Umno's Datuk Mohamed Mokhtar Ahmad Dahlan is in a tough fight with PAS candidate Mohamed Fadzli Abdul Samat, his track record in tackling squatter problems among the Malays and Indians would come in handy.

"The opposition can make promises. But here we are building more than 7,600 low-cost apartments just to resettle almost all the squatters in my area," he said.

Mohamed Mokhtar said the majority of Malays would still go for the BN. The formation of 11 Umno branches recently in Subang augured well for the party.

On the other side, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's presence in Bandar Sunway two days ago for a meet-the-people session which attracted some 10,000 people had also put BN supporters and workers in high spirit.

With the Chinese voters sentiment very much towards the BN and the Indians voters solidly backing BN candidates and a solid Umno workforce of 24,000 members, the Barisan Nasional is all set to retain Subang and the three state seats, though with a reduced majority this time around.

-- BERNAMA

RV RM