

20/11/1999

BN line-up a potent blend (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The Barisan Nasional, seeking a fresh mandate in the 10th general election, came out with its complete list of candidates today with a line-up showing a good blend of new blood and experience.

Fresh faces make up about a third of the 587 candidates who will be signing up to contest for the 14-party coalition when nominations are called tomorrow. The BN is contesting all the 193 parliamentary and 394 State seats.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will be defending the Kubang Pasu seat, his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi the Kepala Batas seat while first Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin is staying put in Merbok.

The newcomers, backgrounds ranging from professionals and administrators to businessmen and those with religious knowledge, are expected to provide the depth required for another winning combination for the BN.

Among them are Universiti Malaya history lecturer Prof Madya Dr Mahadzir Mohamed Khir, former Utusan Melayu journalist Rosnah Majid and Insaniah Institute head Prof Datuk Dr Osman Ishak who are all contesting in Kedah.

Others include doctors Datuk Dr Ng Yen Yen in Raub and Dr Ahmad Shukri Ismail in Pulau Tawar (Pahang). There is also a civil engineer in Mohd Soffi Abdul Razak, who will contest in Benta and a lawyer Wan Rosni Zahari (Hulu Jempol) while Abdul Halim Mat Yunan (Tahan), Tengku Faris Tengku Razlan (Batu Talam) and Chan Choon Fah are teachers.

The list also confirms that three more MBs - Tan Sri Sanusi Junid (Kedah), Tan Sri Isa Samad (NS) and Datuk Shahidan Kassim (Perlis) - have been renominated to contest state seats.

They join Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman (Johor), Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad (Terengganu), Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob (Pahang) and Datuk Seri Abu Hassan Omar (Selangor) and Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon - who could all remain at the helm if they win.

The stewardship of the Perak and Malacca State Governments however will see changes irrespective of the outcome of the polls because Perak Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib and Malacca Chief Minister Datuk Seri Abu Zahar Isnin have been moved to contest federal seats.

Several posers were also finally answered with the release of the list. Among them:

- * Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Halim Ali is not standing for the election;

- * neither is Immigration Director-General Datuk Aseh Che Mat and National Sports Council Director-General Datuk Wira Mazlan Ahmad;

- * former Deputy Prime Minister Tun Ghafar Baba, who was earlier speculated to be retiring from politics, is contesting.

Ghafar moves from the Jasin parliamentary seat to Batu Berendam, also a parliamentary seat,

- * former Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Pawanteh is making a comeback to politics as a candidate for the Kangar parliamentary seat;

- * in Kedah, former Menteri Besar Tan Sri Osman Aroff and Deputy Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr Affifuddin Omar are among those dropped;

- * in Negri Sembilan, former Information Minister Datuk Rais Yatim has been confirmed for the Jelebu seat and Gemenceh Assemblyman Datuk Waad Mansor, who was acquitted of corruption charges recently, is defending his seat; and,

* in Johor, former Information Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Rahmat has been dropped but Backbenchers Club president Datuk Ruhanie Ahmad will be defending his Parit Sulong parliamentary seat.

There was speculation earlier that he would be dropped.

Conspicuously missing from the Johor list is former Welfare Minister Datuk Shahrir Abdul Samad.

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