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Election-MBs

BN TO FIELD NEW FACES IN STATE SEATS

JOHOR BAHRU, Nov 11 (Bernama) -- Johor Barisan Nasional Chairman Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman has said several new faces will be fielded for the state assembly seats in this general election.

"There will be new and old faces. It will be a combination of both," he told reporters after attending a demonstration of the Japanese art of self-defence -- Mushin-Do here last night.

The Johor BN component parties would have the same number of seats as allotted in the last general election but there would be switches among the parties, he said.

In the General Election of 1995, the BN swept clean all 40 seats in the Johor Legislative Assembly and the 20 Parliamentary seats. In that election Umno was allotted 25 state seats, the MCA 11, Gerakan two and the MIC also two.

Johor Umno was given 13 Parliamentary seats, the MCA six and the MIC one.

He said in the choice of candidates one of the criteria would be recognition from the respective local communities.

The BN should field candidates who were acceptable to the local communities as the people now evaluated the candidates who would represent them in the legislatures, he said.

"The important criteria is acceptance of the candidates by the voters so that the person can win in the area," Ghani said.

Asked whether he would contest a state or a Parliamentary seat, Abdul Ghani who is serving his first term as Menteri Besar, said, "I do not know...it is up to the BN Chairman."

"At this point I was directed to arrange for the dissolution of the Johor Assembly and then submit a list of the State BN candidates," he said when asked whether he discussed the candidates with Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Federal Capital in Putrajaya yesterday.

In Shah Alam, Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Abu Hassan Omar also said new faces would be fielded and if they won, they would be given an opportunity to display their talents in the state's administration.

"We have long prepared for this general election and I am confident that the Barisan Nasional will have a landslide victory," he said after an audience with the Regent of Selangor at Istana Mestika in Shah Alam.

Abu Hassan said he would meet the Selangor Umno leaders tonight at Bungunan Umno Selangor in Shah Alam and would follow it up with a meeting with Selangor BN leaders at 4pm tomorrow at the same venue.

He said he had a preliminary list of candidates but was still open to suggestions from the divisions.

"The final decision will of course be with the BN Chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad," he added.

In Penang, State Umno Liaison Committee Deputy Chairman Datuk Mohamed Shariff Omar said a meeting of the committee would be held tonight and would be chaired by Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The meeting was expected to finalise preparations for the election.

Shariff who is also President of the Pulau Pinang Islamic Affairs Council urged political parties to refrain from pasting party symbols on mosque walls.

He said the council had ruled that mosques should not be used for political campaigns and political ceramahs.

Expressing confidence that the people would vote wisely, he said the plethora of party flags, bunting and symbols in a particular area did not reflect the extent of the party's influence among voters.

In Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu Barisan Nasional Chairman Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad said the State Umno Liaison Committee would meet tomorrow night to discuss the candidates' list for the general election.

He said the State Barisan Nasional would meet on Saturday.

All Umno Divisions in Terengganu would submit their proposed candidates to the Menteri Besar at Friday night's meeting.

"The names will then be submitted to the party leadership," he told reporters at this residence, Sri Iman, here.

Wan Mokhtar said the number of new faces had yet to be determined and probably they would be fielded in areas where the BN lost to the opposition in the last election.

"Sure winners will be retained and those with 50-50 chance will be moved to other seats or will have to switch from state to Parliamentary seats or vice versa," he said.

So far there had been no request for any divisional head to be dropped but the final decision rested with Prime Minister and BN Chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, he said.

Wan Mokhtar said the Terengganu BN had prepared four million posters and banners which would be put up after Nomination Day.

Meanwhile Terengganu BN Secretary Datuk Tengku Mahmud Mansor said divisions had been told to prepare a list of turncoats together with the evidence to facilitate action.

"I believe some party members will contest on opposition tickets or become their agents. Against these action will be easy and it will only be difficult against those who act on the quiet," he said.

Umno turncoats face the risk of expulsion from the party, he added.

In Kota Baharu, Kelantan Umno Chief Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah said the State Umno would leave it to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to decide on the candidates for the state.

The Kelantan Umno would work hard to ensure that the BN regained control of the state government, he said.

"The people of Kelantan will be with Umno and they will change the state government," he told Bernama at the Sultan Ismail Petra Airport in Pengkalan Chepa.

Kelantan BN Chairman Datuk Annuar Musa said the Kelantan people were fed up with PAS and would go for the BN in this general election.

PAS had 26 seats in the assembly which was dissolved today. Seventeen were held by the BN. PAS also held six Parliamentary seats and the Kelantan BN had eight.

Kelantan BN Vice-Chairman Datuk Mustapa Mohamad was also confident that the BN would come to power in Kelantan.

In Melaka, State Barisan Nasional Chairman Datuk Seri Abu Zahar Isnin said several new faces from among young BN leaders would be handpicked to replace between 25 and 35 per cent of the assemblymen who had sat in the now dissolved state legislature.

"BN component parties have been submitting their lists of candidates to me today for perusal by the State BN," Abu Zahar said.

The final list would be approved by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, he told reporters at his office in Melaka.

On the allocation of state seats among Melaka BN component parties, he said the status quo would be maintained -- Umno 16, MCA 7, Gerakan 1 and MIC 1.

In the General Election of 1995, the Melaka BN lost three state seats and one Parliamentary seat to the DAP.

In Kota Kinabalu, Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Osu Sukam said the State Umno was likely to contest in all its old Parliamentary seats.

"This is the tradition....unless BN component parties want to switch seats," he told reporters after chairing the State Umno Liaison Committee meeting in Kota Kinabalu.

Osu, who is also the committee's Chairman, said the allocation of seats among the Sabah BN component parties would be done by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"There will be no problem on this score as all component parties have agreed to cooperate to ensure victory for BN candidates," he said.

Sabah Umno has 10 Parliamentary seats -- Marudu, Kota Belud, Beaufort, Sipitang, Papar, Silam, Kinabatangan, Libaran, Beluran and Semporna.

In Seremban, incumbents have pledged to Negeri Sembilan Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamed Isa Abdul Samad that they would support all Barisan Nasional candidates even if they themselves were not selected to contest in the coming polls.

Mohamed Isa said the incumbents had individually pledged not to sabotage the new BN candidates.

"If they go back on their pledge it means, they are untrustworthy," he told reporters after a meeting with the BN incumbents here.

Also present at the news conference were Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Wong See Wah who was reported to have said that he would not seek re-election and the assemblyman for Gemencheh Datuk Waad Mansor who was recently acquitted of three corruption charges and has yet to be tried on two other charges.

Negeri Sembilan has seven Parliamentary and 32 state seats.

Mohamed Isa said no incumbent in Negeri Sembilan had volunteered to step down except Wong.

He said BN Chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would decide on the new faces.

The Menteri Besar also said certain people who had no confidence in winning might start trouble.

In IPOH, Perak Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib said the list of State Barisan Nasional candidates would be submitted to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad soon.

The list of candidates would be announced on the eve of nomination day, he told reporters after chairing the State Umno Liaison Committee meeting in Ipoh today. He later chaired a meeting of the Perak Barisan Nasional.

Replying to questions, he said Dr Mahathir would decide on the allocation of seats among the Perak BN component parties.

The Perak BN was confident of retaining all 23 Parliamentary and the 51 state seats it won in the last general election in 1995, he added. It only lost the state seat of Sitiawan to the DAP.

However in a by-election in 1997, the DAP won the Teluk Intan Parliamentary seat.

Ramli expressed the hope that the people in the state would continue to support the BN.

-- BERNAMA