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Election-Shahidan (News Focus)
WHAT'S IN STORE FOR SHAHIDAN?

KANGAR, Nov 17 (Bernama) -- There are three things that could happen to Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim in this general election, but till now the answer is still a matter of speculation.

Shahidan could contest a state seat again, be moved to a parliamentary constituency or be dropped from the list of candidates.

These possibilities were broached by Shahidan himself when asked about his political future.

"I may be a candidate for a state seat, for parliamentary or be dropped," said the 49-year-old Menteri Besar.

Many local political observers feel that Shahidan has the potential to be nominated for a state seat and be retained as Menteri Besar.

However, others say he may be phased out from the post because there are new faces to replace him.

There is talk that Deputy Home Minister Datuk Azmi Khalid, who is state Umno deputy chief, is in the running for the Menteri Besar's post.

If this is true, then Shahidan will not defend the Tambun Tulang state seat which he won in 1995, and may either be moved to a parliamentary seat or dropped for this election.

"I have never thought about whether I would be renominated or not...the important thing is the BN should win the last general election for this century," he said when met at his office today.

Shahidan, who is state Barisan Nasional (BN) chairman, said he was leaving his fate to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"Dr Mahathir is a +father+ whose advice and decision should be followed," he said repeatedly.

Earlier, there was talk that Shahidan was no longer suitable to be the Menteri Besar because some of his actions allegedly did not go down well with the people.

They included enforcement of regulations against orchard owners who encroached on forest reserves and the acquisition of land for development projects.

The opposition has also exploited certain actions taken by Shahidan, issues which were said to have led to BN's failure to retain the Arau parliamentary seat in a by-election in July last year.

Perlis PAS commissioner Hashim Jasin beat BN's Ismail Kassim in the by-election.

Meanwhile, Azmi, who turns 59 on Dec 13, has declined to comment on speculation that he might replace Shahidan as the Menteri Besar.

Political observers feel that Azmi, who is Padang Besar Umno division chief, is well placed to replace Shahidan if he is picked for a state seat.

-- BERNAMA
AD YBY