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BN members urged to back leadership's choice

ALOR STAR, Mon. - Barisan Nasional members should not squabble over petty issues in the run-up to the Lunas by-election but concentrate on ensuring that the party retains the seat.

Former Lunas Assemblyman Datuk Fang Chok Seong in advising BN members, said it was important that they back the party leadership's choice of candidate and support him fully.

"It shouldn't matter where the candidate is born or where he stays...what is important is he performs after he is elected."

Fang, who was assemblymen in Lunas from 1978 to 1986, cited his own case of standing for election in the constituency.

"I was not a local there as I was born in Serdang and stayed in Baling and Guar Chempedak but the constituents had no problems accepting me as their assemblyman."

Fang's advice did not come without reason. Although the BN has not announced its candidate for the Lunas by-election, it is widely speculated that former Kedah MIC assistant secretary, A. Antonysamy, will be fielded. Although he seems a likely choice following several hints by MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, word has it that the MIC division is not too happy.

(Sources say Antonysamy's name has been submitted by the MIC leadership to BN chairman and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Friday.)

Many MIC members here feel that he is not good enough to be selected to contest the Lunas seat which fell vacant after state assemblyman Dr Joe Fernandez was shot dead by two unidentified gunmen two weeks ago.

To many, he is "a nobody" in the party and an outsider with little knowledge of the constituents' needs and problems.

It is true that Antonysamy, born in Sungai Petani but resides in Butterworth where he has a law practice, is an ordinary member in MIC. But he used to head the Scarborough Estate MIC branch in Sungai Petani.

Although the disgruntled members have not openly expressed their unhappiness to the party leadership, the group, including branch leaders, are making their dislike known in their own way.

Take yesterday's meeting to discuss preparations for the by-election. Only three of 46 MIC Padang Serai branch leaders attended.

Many say this is surely a boycott to show the members' dissatisfaction over the choice of candidate.

"They're not happy (about the choice of candidate) but are afraid to tell the boss (Samy Vellu)," an MIC member said.

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