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Sothinathan is Barisan Nasional candidate for Teluk Kemang seat

M. K. Megan

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - S. Sothinathan, the political secretary to Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, was today chosen as the Barisan Nasional candidate for the Teluk Kemang parliamentary by-election on June 10.

The by-election is expected to be a straight fight between the BN, which is defending the seat, and the opposition front which calls itself Barisan Alternatif.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced the BN candidate this afternoon.

The opposition front, in a faxed statement today, announced Ruslan Kassim, the Parti Keadilan Nasional information chief, as its candidate.

However, there may be a third candidate - from Party Rakyat Insan Malaysia, the splinter group of Keadilan. The party's pro-tem secretary general P. Uthayakumar had earlier announced he would contest the seat under the party banner or as an independent, if it failed to be registered by then.

The opposition front's faxed statement was signed jointly by Pas president Datuk Fadzil Mohd Noor, Keadilan president Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, DAP secretary-general Kerk Kim Hock and Parti Rakyat Malaysia president Dr Syed Husin Ali.

Sothinathan, 40, is a double degree holder with a Business Economics degree from Universiti Malaya and an external Law degree.

He worked with the Koperasi Pekerja Jaya for 14 years from 1985-1998 before he was appointed political secretary to Samy Vellu in April last year.

Hailing from Port Dickson, Sothinathan, is married to Mageswari and they have three children aged between five and eight.

When told about the opposition candidate, Sothinathan said it did not matter who the opposition candidate was.

"Whoever it is I have to face him. Only thing is that we have to work hard on our campaigning. Our election machinery has already started work," he said.

The Teluk Kemang parliamentary seat fell vacant following the death of MP S.A. Anpalagan on April 28. The late Anpalagan was also the Parliamentary Secretary to the Health Ministry. The Teluk Kemang constituency has five State constituencies - Linggi, Pasir Panjang, Chembong, Lukut and Si Rusa.

The seat was recaptured by BN from the DAP in 1974 and it had held on to it since. Anpalagan defeated Keadilan candidate, N. Gobalakrishnan, who stood on a DAP ticket by a majority of 9,942 votes, when he polled 27,112 votes.

Nomination for the by-election is on May 30 and polling will be held on June 10. There are 66,646 registered voters, including 5,005 postal voters.

Malays form the majority of voters, particularly in Chembong, with 74.26 per cent, Linggi (61.32 per cent) and Pasir Panjang (73.06 per cent).

The electorate consists of 30,262 Malays (45.44 per cent), 22,144 Chinese (33.23 per cent), 13,755 Indians (20.64) and 465 (0.70) other races.

The Negri Sembilan State BN scored a historic 100 per cent win in the 1999 general election.

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