

11 JUL 2001

Likas-BN

YONG TECK LEE AGAIN THE FLAG CARRIER FOR BN IN LIKAS

KOTA KINABALU, July 11 (Bernama) -- Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) president Datuk Yong Teck Lee has been named as the Barisan Nasional (BN) candidate in the Likas state by-election.

Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Chong Kah Kiat said Yong's candidacy in Likas had been agreed upon by the BN chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as well as leaders of the Sabah BN component parties.

Chong, who is Sabah BN chairman, made the announcement at a packed news conference after chairing the Sabah BN meeting at the state BN headquarters in Putatan, near here today.

"Today we held a meeting of BN component partners and I've announced the candidate of our choice. I've obtained the endorsement of the BN chairman who gave me the mandate to announce that the BN candidate is Datuk Yong Teck Lee," Chong said to the applause of representatives of Sabah BN component parties.

Asked on the possible objections to Yong's candidacy during nomination tomorrow, Chong said: "To the best of our knowledge, we take a very strong view that Yong is perfectly eligible to stand as a candidate for BN. We have no doubt over his eligibility."

He also said that the BN was prepared to respond to the objections and had not considered any other alternative candidates.

"We have decided on Datuk Yong and our mind is very clear. We felt that injustice has been done to him and that he is perfectly eligible and that he is the best candidate for BN in Likas," Chong said.

Yong's possible ineligibility came to light following the Election Court's ruling that he committed offences under Section 11 (c) and (d) and Section 32 of the Election Offences Act.

The Kota Kinabalu High Court however granted Yong a stay of execution of the Election Court's judgment, clearing the path for him to recontest the Likas seat.

The Likas state seat fell vacant following the Election Court's declaration that the 1999 state election result for the semi-urban constituency was null and void as offences were committed under the Election Offences Act as well as due to the existence of phantom voters.

Chong also expressed confidence that voters in Likas would give their support to Yong as in the 1999 state election when Yong defeated five other candidates with a majority of 4,962 votes.

"He is experienced and has represented Likas not once or twice but for over 10 years...he is indeed the people's representative of Likas," he said.

Asked on Yong's appeal against the judgment of the Election Court which held that he committed offences under the Election Offences Act, which is still pending in the Court of Appeal, Chong said Yong should be given the chance to stand in this by-election.

"If he is not given the opportunity to stand and if the outcome of the appeal is in his favour, we will be doing even more injustice to him," he said.

Asked on the support for Yong, Chong said: "I believe that leaders of BN, from Umno to SAPP to LDP (Liberal Democratic Party)...all component parties, from the leaders right down to divisions, I believe once the decision is made, we will be together to get the job done."

-- BERNAMA

JS RM