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Barisan to announce candidate today

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The Barisan Nasional will announce its candidate for the Ketari by-election at its Bentong headquarters in Pahang at 5.30pm tomorrow.

Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said State BN chairman Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob, who is also leading the BN election team, would name the candidate.

Dr Lim said he would meet BN chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tomorrow.

Gerakan has narrowed down its choice of candidate to two, a doctor and a lawyer, Dr Lim said before attending a dinner hosted by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi for his counterpart from Singapore, Lee Hsien Loong.

It is understood the candidate is either Ketari branch chairman Yum Ah Ha, 51, a lawyer or Perting branch deputy chairman Dr Ng Keong Chye, 46.

On the possibility of a straight fight between BN and DAP, Dr Lim said: "Whether it is a straight fight or a three-corner fight, the seat is a hot seat for BN as we won only with a 231 majority (in the 1999 general election)," he said.

The seat fell vacant following the death of assemblyman Datuk Loke Koon Kam.

Earlier Dr Lim said no conclusion could be drawn from Parti Keadilan Nasional's decision not to contest as the Opposition was capable of anything.

"It is best we wait until nomination day. After that we can come up with our plan for the campaign."

He said Gerakan and the other BN component parties had already laid a strong foundation, and tomorrow their committees at the various polling districts would begin house-to-house visits, especially in the Chinese community.

"I also wish to thank (Pahang Menteri Besar) Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob and Umno for their efforts in rallying the support of the Malay community."

He added that Gerakan was also getting support from Pahang MCA chairman Datuk Chan Kong Choy.

He said all component parties would meet in the next two days to discuss their campaign strategy.

On Pas president Datuk Fadzil Noor's statement that the Barisan Alternatif would assist the DAP if there was a request (by the DAP), Dr Lim said there must be some ulterior motive behind the offer.

"It is a funny thing that despite the DAP having rejected Pas, it still wants to assist the DAP," he said.

Meanwhile, it is learnt that the Election Commission will meet on Wednesday to decide the date of the by-election.

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