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BN and Pas name by-election candidates

ALOR STAR, Tues. - Barisan Nasional is fielding seasoned politicians while Pas has opted for young professionals in the battle for the Pendang and Anak Bukit by-elections.

State BN chairman Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain announced Datuk Othman Abdul as the candidate for the Pendang parliamentary seat and Datuk Zakaria Said for the Anak Bukit State seat.

He made the announcement at the Kedah Umno building here this afternoon.

Later in the evening, at the State Pas headquarters here, acting Pas president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang announced the party's candidates - a medical doctor and an engineer - Dr Mohamad Hayati Othman for Pendang and Amiruddin Hamzah for Anak Bukit.

Othman, 51, who is former Mara chairman, first contested in the Hulu Muda (now Pendang) by-election in 1983 and won. Then in the 1986 general election, he contested again (by then re-named Pendang) and won.

He successfully defended the seat in 1990 and 1995 before losing to Pas president Datuk Fadzil Noor in 1999.

Zakaria, 58, a former teacher, first contested in Anak Bukit in 1982 and remained Assemblyman there after winning the 1986 and 1990 elections. In 1995, he switched to contest the Kuala Kedah parliamentary seat and won. Zakaria did not contest in the 1999 general election.

When announcing the names of the candidates, Syed Razak, who is Menteri Besar, said he hoped everyone would support them.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi have consented to the BN candidates. "We have chosen candidates who we feel can win."

Asked why the BN opted to field Othman, who lost the seat to Fadzil in the 1999 election, Syed Razak said: "He is our candidate and we feel he can win."

Meanwhile, Othman said he was thankful for being given the trust to contest the seat again.

"I accept the fact that I lost in the last general election. However, there were many factors which led to the defeat, especially the Anwar (former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim) factor," he said, adding that many Umno supporters did not vote in the 1999 election out of protest.

Zakaria said he aimed to regain the Anak Bukit seat for BN.

"We just loaned them the seat and it's time to take it back," he said, adding that people in the constituency also wanted the ruling coalition back in power there.

The by-elections, to be held simultaneously on July 18, have been called following the death of Fadzil on June 23.

Fadzil held both seats after wresting the constituencies from BN in the 1999 election.

The Pas candidate for Pendang, Dr Mohamad Hayati, 45, is a local who served as a medical officer in several government hospitals from 1983 to 1995 before opening his own practice in Pendang.

A committee member for the Pendang Pas division, Dr Mohamad Hayati is a graduate of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and had also studied in Kolej Islam in Klang.

While admitting his opponent is a well-known figure, having served as the Pendang MP before, Dr Mohamad Hayati said voters were also aware that

Othman had made some mistakes.

"I have been involved with Pendang people and do not have to promote myself," he said.

Amiruddin, 40, was an engineer with the Muda Agricultural Development Authority from 1984 to 1996. During the same period, he was also a councillor for the Kubang Pasu district.

He is now a management and training consultant.

Amiruddin said Anak Bukit is not alien to him, having been an engineer with Mada, adding that Zakaria was his friend and his father's friend.

"I see a healthy contest," he added.

Abdul Hadi said Pas was confident it could retain the two seats as both its candidates had served the constituents long before the by-elections.

He said the Anak Bukit seat was important to Pas because it did not want BN to get back its two-thirds majority in the Kedah State Legislative Assembly.

Asked why Fadzil's son Dr Ammar, who was speculated to be one of the candidates, was not chosen, Abdul Hadi said: "He is still young and needs more experience."