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BN expects bigger win in Ketari by-election

BENTONG, Tues. - Barisan Nasional is confident of a bigger majority in the Ketari State by-election despite a tough challenge from the Opposition, Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said today.

He said irrespective of whether the fight would be three-cornered, or a straight contest, BN could expect a tough challenge.

Dr Lim said the feedback on the ground had been good as the BN had managed to resolve many of the people's problems in the last 12 months.

He was speaking to reporters after attending the late Datuk Loke Koon Kam's funeral here.

Loke, 59, the assemblyman for Ketari, died on Sunday.

Dr Lim said since Loke had been ill for the past two years, Gerakan had set up 10 service centres headed by party secretary-general Chia Kwang Chye to look into the needs of the Ketari constituents.

He said many problems were brought to the attention of Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob, who personally helped resolved them.

On whether the 231-majority Loke managed against DAP's Choong Siew Onn in the 1999 general election was cause for concern, Dr Lim said Gerakan had done a detailed analysis on this and identified the weaknesses for the poor majority.

"I am confident more voters will respond positively this time," he said, adding that Gerakan had set up an election committee to prepare to the by-election.

He said he had spoken to Adnan and feels it is best that he (Adnan) headed the BN election committee for the by-election.

"The MCA Pahang and Bentong chairmen have promised me their full support and I am sure all other BN component parties will do the same," he said.

Dr Lim said he will be meeting MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu soon over this.

On whether Gerakan had shortlisted any candidates, he said he would meet all divisional committee leaders in the next two days to get their feedback.

"We will also consult the voters in the constituency to get an idea of what kind of candidate they actually want," he said.

Following this, he said the Gerakan Central Working Committee will make a decision and leave the final say to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The date for the CWC meeting would be fixed after the Pahang State Gerakan meeting this Sunday where the likely candidates would be shortlisted.

Following the 1999 electoral roll, there are a total 15,759 voters in Ketari which is under the Bentong Parliamentary constituency.

Malays make up 36.7 per cent, Chinese (56.8 %), Indians (4.5%); and others (2%).

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