

05 MAR 2002

Adnan-Ketari

BN TO FIELD GERAKAN CANDIDATE IN KETARI POLLS, SAYS ADNAN

KUANTAN, March 5 (Bernama) -- The Barisan Nasional (BN) will field a candidate from Gerakan in the upcoming Ketari by-election, Menteri Besar and Pahang BN chairman Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob said today.

"Traditionally, the candidate must come from Gerakan but MCA, Umno and other BN component parties must help out," he told reporters after presenting Pahang Foundation scholarships to primary school pupils here today.

He said the candidate would be decided by Prime Minister and BN chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The seat fell vacant following the death of incumbent Datuk Loke Koon Kam, 60, who died on Sunday after battling jawbone cancer for two years.

Adnan said the BN was scouting for a suitable candidate from Pahang to defend the seat.

He said he had met several times and had contacted Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik to discuss about the candidate.

Dr Lim said yesterday that Gerakan had identified a suitable candidate but would seek the advice of Dr Mahathir and Adnan on its choice.

Asked on BN's preparations for the by-election, Adnan said the State BN had always ensured the people's well-being regardless of whether there was an election unlike the opposition which would be only active whenever there is an election to slander the government and its leaders.

Meanwhile, Bentong Umno division vice-head Datuk Zaini Salleh said the division had set up a special committee to make early preparations for the by-election.

He said the division would coordinate its activities with the Bentong BN Parliamentary Main Committee.

Zaini said the division would fully support and cooperate with the BN candidate named for the seat.

"Although there are only 13 Umno branches in the Ketari state constituency with 6,758 voters, their total support for BN was crucial to retain the seat," he said.

He said the special committee would be activated from now although the Election Commission had not set the dates for nomination and polling.

"I think it will not be an uphill task for the BN to retain the seat in the absence of major issues that can be exploited by the opposition," he said.

In BENTONG, Pahang DAP secretary Leong Ngah Ngah said the party had identified two candidates to be fielded in the constituency.

He said the aspirants were influential locals and known to Ketari folks.

The State DAP would hold a special meeting in Bentong tomorrow night chaired by Pahang DAP chairman Lip Tuck Chee discuss strategies for the by-election.

Leong said although the DAP only had three branches -- Perting, Ketari and Bukit Tinggi -- in the constituency with about 300 members, it was not a yardstick to gauge the party's strength in the area.

"The DAP has many silent supporters as evident from the narrow victory by BN in the last election," he said.

The late Loke retained the seat with a slim 231-vote majority when he polled 5,874 votes against 5,643 by DAP's Choong Siew Onn.

"Losing to BN with a slim margin shows the party received the people's

attention," said Leong, who is the assemblyman for Triang, the sole DAP seat in Pahang.

In ALOR SETAR, PAS president Datuk Fadzil Noor said the party had decided not to contest in Ketari.

He said the DAP, which opted out from the opposition front on Sept 22 last year, had the right to contest just like other parties.

The Parliamentary opposition leader said PAS, Keadilan and Parti Rakyat Malaysia (PRM) leaders would meet soon to decide whether they should participate in the by-election.

Asked to comment on Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob's challenge to PAS to hand over the party's video recording of the Memali incident to RTM to prove police brutality, Fadzil said the party had no such video recording.

However, Yusof Husin, the right-hand man of Ibrahim Libya, could relate the whole incident, he said.

Ibrahim Libya was among the 18 people killed in the incident, including four policemen.

He said PAS Youth would stage a pantomime on the memali incident based on the local residents' account of the incident which happened 17 years ago.

The incident should not be highlighted on television as the case was still pending in court, he added.

-- BERNAMA

JM TS