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Election-Solidarity (News Analysis)

BN IS THE EPITOME OF THE NATION'S SPIRIT OF SOLIDARITY

By: Ahmad Zukiman Zain

IPOH, March 16 (Bernama) -- It is not easy to meet everyone's wish especially when a partnership involves a huge number of people. But for the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition of 14 parties, the sense of solidarity and cooperation is amply portrayed by the candidates fielded in this general election.

"I know that it is not easy to name and place the candidates...a lot has to be put in thought," said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to thousands of supporters who had come out to greet him during his half-day visit to Perak yesterday.

Abdullah, who is the BN chairman, chose to visit Perak as his first stop after settling the BN list of candidates for nomination last Saturday, to thank the state's leadership for abiding by the BN's spirit of cooperation.

"Relatively, this state is the only one which has candidates from all Barisan component parties in the Peninsular," said Abdullah, who is for the first time heading the BN to face a general election since taking over from Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad last Oct 31.

Perak has 24 parliamentary constituencies and 59 state seats including Pokok Assam, which had been won without contest by the BN candidate on Nomination Day.

On the basis of BN's solidarity, the People's Progressive Party (PPP), though small, was also allocated one parliamentary seat, Taiping, which will be contested by its president Datuk M. Kayveas.

Two more presidents of the BN component parties, Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik (Gerakan) and Datuk Seri S.Samy Vellu (MIC), are contesting as incumbents in their respective seats of Bruas and Sungai Siput parliamentary seats, which they have held for many years.

Wanita Umno chief Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, on the other hand, is defending her Kuala Kangsar parliamentary seat, while MCA secretary-general

Tan Sri Ting Chew Peh is contesting in the Gopeng parliamentary seat again.

As a party representing various races, the BN also shows its uniqueness in its manifesto with the theme "Excellence, Glory and Distinction", unveiled by Abdullah two days ago.

"Barisan Nasional is very unique in that it represents all races in Malaysia. All quarters are given a place in the development of Malaysia. This makes Barisan Nasional a formula for the greatest political partnership in the world and an effective one till today," said Abdullah in the manifesto.

It is this solidarity spirit upheld by the BN that the 10.28 million eligible voters would vote for this Sunday, to deliver a bigger mandate to Abdullah to bring the nation to greater heights.

"We're one big family that represents the country, something that cannot be matched by the opposition parties," Dr Ting told Bernama today, in between his campaign rounds in Gopeng.

He said Abdullah's visit was itself a reflection of the BN spirit because it showed that "he is concerned for all BN candidates".

Abdullah himself told the gathering that after decisions were made among the component parties on the candidates to be fielded in certain areas, the component parties would render their full support because they are all BN candidates.

Kayveas, making his electoral debut, thanked BN for allotting the parliamentary seat as well as a state seat in Perak to the party in the spirit of the coalition's "kongsi kuasa".

"It would definitely give PPP a better standing and hopefully other states could follow Perak," he told Bernama.

The BN's solidarity spirit is not only acknowledged by component parties but is also craved for by other parties, such as the Indian Progressive Front (IPF) led by Datuk M.G.Pandithan, which is still hoping to be accepted into the BN fold.

The party had also sent some of its members to Abdullah's meet-the-people session at the Dewan Indera Mulia here yesterday as a show of support to the Prime Minister.

"Only the Barisan Nasional can give priority to unity so that the

rakyat can live in peace and harmony," said Pandithan, ex-MP of  
Taph in  
Perak, to Bernama.

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