

18 MAR 2004

Election-Ipoh Timor

IPOH TIMOR: COMEBACK OR END OF POLITICAL CAREER OF KIT SIANG?

By: R.Lakshimi Dewi

IPOH, March 18 (Bernama) -- With only three more days to polling day,

the question on everyone's mind is whether this general election will mark

the end of DAP chairman Lim Kit Siang's political career.

While only voters in the Ipoh Timor parliamentary constituency have the

answer, Lim's move from Penang to contest in Ipoh Timor has stirred up some

heat in the Kinta Valley and throughout the country.

The Kinta Valley has one of the highest number of Chinese voters in the

country, with Ipoh Timor alone having 85 per cent Chinese voters out of the

73,325 voters in the constituency.

For many visiting here, the hectic campaigning, canvassing for votes at

pasar malam and markets and poster war reveal the intense war between the

Barisan Nasional (BN) and DAP for the constituency.

The straight fight between incumbent Thong Fah Chong, 47, and Lim, 63,

followed a last-minute pullout by Keadilan supreme council member Dr Lee

Boon Chye, who will be contesting in Gopeng instead.

Following Dr Lee's withdrawal, the Kinta Valley is all set for a heated

battle between Thong and Lim, who is trying to make a comeback to parliament after losing in Penang in 1999.

On nomination day, both candidates quoted their chances at 50-50.

Lim's tag line is "bring back the voice of the people to parliament to

voice out against corruption."

But when Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi paid a visit to Ipoh Timor on

Monday, the prime minister said: "We are also the voice of the people."

And Abdullah's strong drive against corruption, which among others saw

one minister and a top corporate figure being charged with bribery, had

somehow dented Lim's campaign.

With many BN and opposition leaders making endless visits to the city,

the blitz to woo the Chinese voters has become intense and the

momentum is
gaining in the final 72 hours.

Tomorrow, former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is coming for a "meet with the people session" at 3pm and his popularity with the Chinese community has worried DAP officials.

A sniff down in Ipoh Timor revealed that many voters are still undecided although there are many tilting towards the BN in the hope of continuity of peace, stability and economic progress.

But there is also a significant number of voters who want a "check and balance" as well as those who are sympathetic with Lim.

"I think the scale now is 60-40 in favour of BN...Kit Siang's move to Perak is only temporary because he has no other place to go," said 43-year-old businessman David Woo.

C.H Wong, 50, an engineer, said that even though the DAP was putting up a strong fight here, the locals appreciated the development and infrastructures brought by the BN.

He also said that it was hard to say how the majority of voters would respond as the campaigning time was short but he believed that the DAP would capitalise on localised problems and certain issues to stir up emotions at the last minute.

"On top of that, they (DAP) are talking about opposition voice in Parliament...having someone in Parliament to make sure of transparency and business opportunities and combating corruption.

"I also think this election was held too early...maybe Abdullah could have held it six months later, as then his (Abdullah) move to combat corruption and to run a people-oriented government would have formed a strong image in the people's mind," said Wong.

Another businessman, Andrew Loo, 37, said he believed that Lim's move to Ipoh Timor was because of the large Chinese majority factor.

"So he sees it as a strong point but he also needs to understand that the younger generations have different set of thinking...they look for stability which only a BN-led government can provide," said Loo.

-- BERNAMA
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