

13 MAR 2004

Nomination-Kelantan (Candidates)

MUSTAPA IN STRAIGHT FIGHTS FOR STATE AND PARLIAMENTARY SEATS

JELI, March 13 (Bernama) -- Kelantan Umno liaison chairman Datuk Mustapa Mohamed, who is standing in the Jeli parliamentary and Air Lanas state constituencies, will engage in straight fights with PAS candidates for both seats in the general election.

PAS is fielding incumbent Mohamed Apandi Mohamad, 44, in Jeli and Abdullah Ya'kub, 43, also the incumbent, in Air Lanas.

Mustapa, 54, lost to Mohamed Apandi by 693 votes in Jeli in the 1999 general election, polling 14,830 votes against Apandi's 15,523.

Two other state seats, Bukit Bunga and Kuala Balah -- will also see straight fights between BN and PAS candidates.

For Bukit Bunga, a new constituency, the BN is fielding Mohamed Adhan Kechik, 49, while for Kuala Balah, formerly known as Pergau, its candidate is Abdul Aziz Derashid, 48.

Both contested and lost to PAS candidates in the last election.

PAS will field two new faces, Sufely Abdul Razak in Bukit Bunga and Mat Rasid Mat Jaais, 51, in Kuala Balah.

The candidates were announced at the nomination centre at the Jeli land and district office after objections ended at 11am.

About 10,000 BN supporters accompanied their candidates to the nomination centre while the PAS supporters numbered 6,000.

Mustapa, who is also Kelantan BN chairman, told reporters later that he was happy with the thousands of BN supporters who turned up at all the 14 nomination centres in the state.

He said that compared with the 1995 and 1999 general elections, the mood of the BN and Umno members this time around was very good and this augured well for the BN to return to power in the state.

The BN would go all out to wrest the state from PAS although it knew that PAS was strong in Kelantan, he said.

On incumbent Datuk Ibrahim Ali contesting in the Pasir Mas parliamentary constituency as an independent in a three-cornered fight with the BN and PAS, Mustapa said the BN was prepared to face any

challenges and would fight to the end to win Pasir Mas and the three state seats under it.

On PAS' statement that it was a mistake for him to contest two seats, he said there was nothing wrong with the strategy and it was aimed at balancing the BN's strength at the parliamentary and state levels.

Meanwhile, Ibrahim, who won the Pasir Mas seat on a BN ticket in the last election, when met, apologised to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawim former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak for standing as an independent candidate this time.

He said he was not opposing Umno but was clearing his name after being slandered and dropped as Pasir Mas Umno head.

Ibrahim, who will use the umbrella symbol, will face the BN's Datuk Abdul Rahim Abdul Rahman and PAS' Ismail Noh.

Abdul Rahim, who replaced him as Pasir Mas Umno pro tem chairman, said Umno was not afraid of a three-cornered fight.

He told Bernama that the constituents wanted change and nearly all the Umno members in the division as well as some PAS members had expressed their intention to support him.

Kelangan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat told reporters that he hoped the people of Kelantan would continue to give PAS the mandate to rule the state.

Kelantanese must maintain the spirit of Islamic unity and guard what they were enjoying now to save the state from disunity, he said.

Nik Aziz will be challenged by Pengkalan Chepa Wanita Umno pro tem head Ruhani Mamat in the Chempaka state constituency.

Meanwhile, the BN incumbent for the Pengkalan Chepa parliamentary seat, Datuk Dr Nik Mohamed Zain Omar, asked the people to give him a chance to bring change to the area.

He said the BN could fulfil all the promises that it made to the people.

Nik Mohamed Zain will be challenged by PAS' Datuk Abdul Halim Abdul Rahman who is also Deputy Menteri Besar.

Kelantan Umno secretary Datuk Dr Awang Adek Hussin, who is standing in the Bachok parliamentary constituency, believes that the BN can win the seat as well as the three state seats under it -- Jelawat, Perupok and Tawang -- judging from the calibre of its candidates and the change in the attitude of the people.

If they persisted in choosing PAS, there would be no change in Bachok and it would be left behind by development, said Awang Adek who will be challenging the incumbent, Wan Nik Wan Yusof of PAS.

Pasir Puteh Umno division pro tem head Kamarudin Mohamed Nor, who is challenging the PAS incumbent, Hussin Awang, for the Semerak state seat, said the constituents now realised the weakness of the PAS administration where most of the PAS elected representatives were getting paid for doing nothing.

Kamarudin won the seat from PAS on a BN ticket in a by-election in 1997.

Meanwhile, Muslimat PAS head Kalthom Othman became the first woman to be fielded by PAS in Kelantan since 1969.

She is standing against the BN's Che Min Che Ahmad, deputy director (operations) of the Department for Islamic Advancement Malaysia, in the Pasir Puteh parliamentary constituency.

-- BERNAMA

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