

**Najib Strikes With Transformation Team For GE13**  
**Bernama**  
**15 April, 2013**

KUALA LUMPUR, April 15 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak has thrown down the gauntlet to the opposition, with the Barisan Nasional (BN) all set to field a refreshing slate of seasoned and new faces for the 13th General Election.

First timers will make up a third of parliamentary candidates and almost half of those selected for the state elections, with most fielded in opposition-led states.

No last-minute changes are expected, said Najib, who is leading the coalition for the first time as the prime minister and into the nation's toughest-ever polls, after he handed over nomination documents and the BN election pledge to BN component party leaders and state liaison chairmen in Kuala Lumpur, Monday.

Asked whether he was worried about the disappointment that might be felt by those not picked to stand in the election, Najib said: "I am more worried about the disappointment of the rakyat."

A titanic battle for Gelang Patah in Johor between Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman and DAP advisor Lim Kit Siang is all but confirmed when the parliamentary constituency was missing from the MCA's list issued Monday.

Gelang Patah was won by MCA in the 2008 General Election and the party was reportedly planning to field division chief and first-timer Jason Teoh when the dynamics changed after Lim announced his move to the Chinese-majority seat.

MCA and Gerakan were the first component parties to reveal the full list of their candidates while the People's Progressive Party (PPP) named four out of five candidates.

On Tuesday, UMNO, MIC and the rest of the BN component parties in Sabah and Sarawak are expected to unveil their candidates.

The MCA will contest 37 parliamentary and 90 state seats compared to the 40 parliamentary and 90 seat share previously. Apart from Gelang Patah, it will not run for the Kuantan and Wangsa Maju parliamentaries.

Former president Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat was dropped from defending the Pandan parliamentary seat, while two vice-presidents, Datuk Seri Dr Ng Yen Yen, who is also the party's Wanita chief, and Gan Ping Sieu were also excluded.

President Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek, who fought a bitter party contest against two predecessors, Ong Tee Keat and Tan Sri Ong Ka Ting, for the top MCA post in 2010, will not contest as he had stated earlier.

The Pandan seat has been taken over by the division's legal advisor, Garry Lim.

PPP president Datuk Seri M. Kayveas is the latest and fourth component party leader who will be out. Kayveas, who won the Taiping parliamentary in 2004 but lost it in 2008, is not among the party's candidates this time.

Gerakan president Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon and Sarawak United People's Party president Datuk Seri Peter Chin Fah Kui are the other two leaders who had announced much earlier, that they would not be running.

Gerakan was allocated 11 parliamentary and 31 state seats, just one parliamentary seat short compared to 2008. The party suffered a huge setback when it won only two parliamentary and five state seats the last time.

But Gerakan got its wish to return and contest in Taiping. Vice-president and Wanita chief Datuk Tan Lian Hoe, who is also deputy domestic trade and consumer affairs minister, will contest there, her third parliament race after back-to-back wins in Bukit Gantang (2004) and Gerik (2008).

PPP, which was given Taiping and the Pasir Bedamar state seat in Perak in 2008, will now contest the Kepong parliamentary seat with party information chief Datuk A. Chandrakumanan picked as candidate, and four state seats, Pasir Bedamar, Guchil (Kelantan), Kota Laksamana (Melaka) and Kota Alam Shah in Selangor.

Najib, who is also Selangor BN chairman, is scheduled to reveal UMNO's candidates for Selangor which will see BN mounting a stiff fight to regain the state.

The candidates for the 222 parliamentary and 505 state seats will receive nomination letters from the respective state BN liaison chiefs Tuesday.

As the BN chairman, Najib said he had considered voter sentiment and expectations in his decision to field 33 per cent new faces for the parliamentary fight and 49 per cent new faces for the state contests.

He is confident that those picked will be able to deliver on the BN's pledges enshrined in its manifesto that was released on April 6.

He urged those who were not selected to continue to support the party because it did not mean that they had failed or were problematic, but some would have to make way in the demand for change by voters and the community.

Nomination for the general election is this Saturday, with polling on May 5.

Meanwhile, the opposition continues to lose support with more than 200 Indian members of PKR and DAP crossing over to MIC in Paya Besar in Lunas, Kedah.

In Pasir Puteh, Kelantan, Danan Timur PAS division secretary Ibrahim Ismail, 63, declared that he would contest as an independent candidate for the Selising state assembly seat to protest against PAS for fielding incumbent Saiful Baharin Mohamad.

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Source: <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v7/newsindex.php?id=942224>