

## **BN To Mount Strong Challenge In Swing States**

**Bernama**

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KUALA LUMPUR (Bernama) -- The battle lines in the 13th general election were stretched taut today with the naming of Umno candidates by the Barisan Nasional (BN) that sees federal heavyweights International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed and his deputy minister, Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir, moved to the Kelantan and Kedah state contests.

Outgoing Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman will stand in Gelang Patah, ending days of intense speculation about his face-off with DAP advisor Lim Kit Siang in the Chinese-majority parliamentary constituency.

Prime Minister and BN chairman Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak rattled the fight to win back another swing state, Selangor, with a list of 80 per cent new candidates which includes professionals such as lawyers, engineers, accountants and businessmen.

"This is the line-up which will redeem our defeat and return the BN as the government in Selangor," said Najib who will be defending his Pekan parliamentary home seat in Pahang.

A surprise in the BN Selangor line-up is Datuk Zulkifli Noordin, who will be fielded as a direct candidate for the Shah Alam parliamentary constituency. The 51-year-old lawyer won the Kulim Bandar Baharu parliamentary seat in Kedah on a PKR ticket in 2008 but is now an independent.

Klang Umno division deputy head Nasarruddin M Zin is fielded in Port Klang where Menteri Besar Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim of PKR will contest this time in a change from his previous Ijok seat.

Mustapa, affectionately called "Tok Pa" by Kelantan grassroots, will stand for the Air Lanas state seat in the Jeli parliamentary constituency which he will defend as well.

Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, who remains a force in state politics, will contest in his Gua Musang parliamentary stronghold, seen as a walkover for the 76-year-old Kelantan prince, the oldest BN candidate in the reckoning.

The BN will field Che Johan Che Pa in the Pasir Mas parliamentary constituency that was won by Perkasa chief Datuk Ibrahim Ali.

In Kedah, Mukhriz is lined up for the Ayer Hitam state seat.

The one-term parliamentarian and son of former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is among 19 new faces included to contest the 36 state seats.

The BN is also fielding another seven first-timers in the fight for the 15 parliamentary constituencies at stake.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom, already a two-term senator, will make his parliamentary debut in Jerai.

Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Chor Chee Heung will defend the Alor

Star parliamentary seat.

In Johor, Muar-born Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin, touted as Abdul Ghani's successor, will stand in the Permas state constituency after being an MP for the past 23 years.

Perlis will have a new menteri besar because incumbent Datuk Seri Dr Md Isa Sabu has been dropped.

Melaka too will have a new man at the helm following Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam's move to contest the Bukit Katil parliamentary seat.

Meanwhile, several veterans have made way for younger leaders, among them former prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Information Communication and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yakcop and Deputy Home Minister Datuk Abu Seman Yusop.

Umno Youth information chief Datuk Seri Reezal Merican Naina Merican will contest the Kepala Batas parliamentary seat in Penang in place of Abdullah.

Tasek Gelugor, also a parliamentary seat in Penang, won by Nor Mohamed in 2008 will see a new BN contender, Shabudin Yahaya.

Rais is replaced by Jelebu Umno division vice-chief Zainuddin Ismail for the parliamentary contest there.

Abu Seman, a four-term MP for Masjid Tanah in Melaka, was dropped in favour of Melaka Puteri Umno chief Mas Ermieyati Samsudin.

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