

## **GE13 Moves Into Starting Blocks**

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KUALA LUMPUR, April 19 (Bernama) -- Political parties move into the starting blocks tomorrow with nominations for the 13th General Election and emotions run high as the May 5 polling nears.

Frenzied lobbying saw last-minute changes to the list of candidates, not only in the Barisan Nasional (BN) but also in the opposition camp where the bickering has bared tensions, especially in the DAP and PKR.

Disgruntled hopefuls left out will likely bump up the number of independents filing their papers to a high and spawning more multi-cornered fights than usual.

Election Commission (EC) chairman Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof has called on all quarters to ensure a peaceful and smooth nomination for the 222 parliamentary and 505 state seats

On the eve of nomination, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, who is leading the BN into polls for the first time as the prime minister, with a 'People First' manifesto, returned to his Pekan parliament constituency and joined local residents to perform evening prayers at Masjid Sultan Abu Bakar.

He will file his nomination papers at the Dewan Konvensyen Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah in Pekan Saturday morning.

Najib is seeking a big mandate from the people to continue his transformation agenda of the government to build a brighter future for all Malaysians, which he started four years ago after taking over from Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

As in the past, the BN is fielding contestants for all the seats at stake. In the 2008 polls, the BN picked up seven parliamentary and two state seats uncontested on nomination day while opposition PAS gained one state seat.

Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, who was in Johor on Friday, urged incumbents who were dropped to respect the decision of the BN leadership.

"We have decided on the candidates. What has to be done now is to close ranks and help the candidates to win," he told reporters after visiting the Kampung Tengah Sungai Terap polling district.

Muhyiddin reminded the opposition not to manipulate and link UMNO with any decision by the Registrar of Societies (ROS), referring to the investigation by the ROS into the party's alleged election irregularities, following a complaint by some of the party's members.

ROS stated that the DAP had not been de-registered and it could still use its party symbol during the election.

There was confusion on Friday, over which logo the DAP will use after chairman Karpal Singh said the party would contest under the PAS logo in Peninsular Malaysia and use the PKR symbol in Sabah and Sarawak.

Party adviser Lim Kit Siang said in Johor, the party might resort to that while party secretary-general Lim Guan Eng told the media in Penang that their candidates would carry two appointment letters, with one from the DAP and the other of the alternative party for the nomination.

The DAP, which will be contesting 53 parliamentary and 103 state seats, continues to face resistance in Kedah over its choice of candidates for the Derga and Kota Darul Aman state seats, while in Ipoh, 60 supporters protested the axing of the party's incumbent for the Jalong state seat.

The PKR has tightened the leash on its candidates by getting them to sign a pledge not to jump ship after receiving their appointment letters or they would have to cough up RM5 million to compensate the party, according to its deputy secretary-general Steven Choong Friday.

In JOHOR, which will witness the hottest contest in the polls, Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman and (DAP adviser) Kit Siang will seal their fight for the Gelang Patah federal seat at the Dewan Serbaguna Skudai, the same venue where the result of their clash will be announced.

In KEDAH, Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir, who is contesting a state seat for the first time, will head for Sekolah Menengah Sains Kubang Pasu to confirm his candidacy for the Ayer Hitam seat under the Jerlun parliamentary constituency which he won in his election debut in 2008.

Much attention is on Mukhriz, who is the only one of former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's children to follow him into the political arena, and he is seen as the menteri besar-designate as the BN goes on the offensive to wrest back Kedah which fell to the opposition for the first time in 2008.

In KELANTAN, Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed, one of two BN candidates to stand for two seats in the coming polls, will file his nomination at the Jeli District and Land Office to defend the Jeli parliamentary seat and his return to contest the Air Lanas state seat which he had won before in 2004.

Kelantan veteran Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, who has been named to defend his stronghold of Gua Musang, has rubbished speculation that he would quit UMNO and join the opposition on polling day.

"I never had the desire to join PAS and will remain with UMNO as the party is in my soul. I joined the party since young and am still with UMNO," he said in a meet-the-people event in Gua Musang on Friday.

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