

Upset with BN, Shariff to run as independent in Tasik Gelugor
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GEORGE TOWN, April 17 — Former Tasik Gelugor MP Datuk Seri Mohd Shariff Omar announced last night he will still contest the seat despite Barisan Nasional (BN) choosing another candidate for the May 5 general election.

Shariff had expected to regain the berth after Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yakcop agreed not to stand again despite winning there in Election 2008. It was one of two federal seats that BN won in Penang in that general election.

The former deputy minister with a strong following in Tasek Gelugor criticised the BN leadership for picking candidates that were against the people's wishes.

"I will be a Pakatan Rakyat-friendly candidate for this seat," the 65-year-old told reporters after an impromptu gathering of some 2,000 supporters outside his house here.

"I can be an independent, can be on DAP ticket, I can stand under PKR or PAS because all their leaders are my friends," he added, hours after BN announced that Shahbudin Yahya will contest the Tasek Gelugor seat.

Shariff predicted that there could be a multi-cornered fight in Tasek Gelugor and the three state seats in that constituency.

Former Sungai Dua state assemblyman Datuk Jasmin Mohamed, who was dropped, could be defending his seat as an independent as BN has already picked a new face, Muhamad Yusoff Mohd Noor, to defend the state seat.

When asked if he was willing to face the consequences of being expelled from the party for contesting as an independent, Shariff said the party leadership could do so anytime.

"If they want to expel me, then by all means do so, do it tonight and don't just threaten us," he said.

Shariff insisted that he will stand as a candidate "no matter what" before warning BN that it may lose Tasek Gelugor, which is considered the coalition's stronghold.

"If they are not careful, they should not expect Tasek Gelugor to be a safe constituency but actually a big risk that they've taken here," he said.

The former deputy minister for Agriculture and Agro-based Industry first stood in Tasek Gelugor in 1999 where he won with a majority of 4,236 votes. In 2004, he beat PAS candidate Mujahid Yusof Rawa by a landslide 10,183-vote majority.

But he gave up the seat in 2008 for the then second finance minister Nor Mohamed, who kept the seat for BN with a 4,547-vote margin, defeating Ismail Salleh of PAS.

Another BN leader, A. Mohan, told a press conference earlier of his intention to contest the Batu Kawan federal seat and to resign from Gerakan.

"BN did not consider the sacrifices I made in these past four years to serve the people but

the party obviously did not appreciate my hard work," the BN Batu Kawan co-ordinator said.

Visibly upset, Mohan said he has also decided to quit from his party but he currently has no plans to join other parties.

"I was confident that we (BN) could win back the Batu Kawan seat if given the chance but now that they are going for a candidate who is new even in this area, we may not win," he said.

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