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Abdullah-Likas

ABDULLAH TO DISCUSS WITH PM ON BN CANDIDATE FOR LIKAS

KOTA KINABALU, June 30 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today he would discuss with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on the Barisan Nasional (BN) candidate to be fielded in the Likas state by-election next month.

He said the BN leadership does not prevent any component party from expressing their desire to field a candidate in the by-election.

"Nevertheless, what's important is that after a decision has been made, all of us must support the candidate," he told reporters after opening the Sabah native land conference here.

The Election Commission had fixed July 12 for nomination and in the event of a contest, polling would be held on July 21.

The by-election is called following an Election Court decision on June 8 that the March 13, 1999 state election result for the Likas seat was null and void.

On whether Likas former assemblyman Datuk Yong Teck Lee was eligible to defend the seat, Abdullah said Yong's applications for legal remedies with regard to the Likas election petition ruling would not affect the holding of the by-election.

In the March 13, 1999 state election, Yong, who is also Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) president, retained the seat for the BN with a 4,962-vote majority in the six-way contest.

Asked whether the SAPP would again be given the opportunity to field a candidate, Abdullah, who is also BN deputy chairman, said the matter would also be discussed with Dr Mahathir.

He said he would suggest to Dr Mahathir that Chief Minister Datuk Chong Kah Kiat, who is also Sabah BN chairman, lead the BN election campaign.

He said the BN had a good chance to retain the seat based on the preparations made.

On the 2000 Electoral Roll to be used for the by-election which allegedly still contained phantom voters, Abdullah said it was the responsibility of the Election Commission to ensure authenticity of the names of voters in the roll.

Commission Chairman Datuk Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman, in announcing the dates for nomination and polling day, said the roll contained 26,196 registered voters and had been verified and updated till Wednesday (June 27).

Asked whether there was a need to step up monitoring at polling stations, he said everyone could play a role to monitor the conduct of the by-election.

Asked to comment on the call by the Opposition to set up a Royal Commission of Inquiry to investigate foreigners in Sabah holding Malaysian identity cards, he said the government was taking action to tackle the problem.

He said Home Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Aseh Che Mat had been instructed to hold a meeting with the relevant departments to discuss ways to overcome the problem.

-- BERNAMA

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