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As promised, Wong won't be defending Limbang seat

KUCHING, Tues. - Sarawak's grand old man of politics Datuk Amar James Wong Kim Hin is keeping his promise that the 1996 State election was the last time he would contest and defend the Limbang seat.

The Sarawak National Party (SNAP) president is not on the Barisan Nasional list of candidates for the Sept 27 State elections.

Wong, 79, who is Environment and Public Utilities Minister, did not nominate himself in the list of seven SNAP candidates submitted to the State BN chairman and Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud.

"I have announced SNAP's candidates and it is final," he said when asked about the possibility of the list being reviewed at the eleventh hour.

He said it was not likely to change but it all depends on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Announcing the dissolution of the State Assembly yesterday, Taib said he had discussed the list of candidates with Dr Mahathir during a meeting on Aug 28 "and the PM is happy with the list".

The Limbang seat, which has been Wong's political fort since 1956, will not actually see the last of Wong as SNAP has nominated his 48-year-old son, Richard Wong Shoon Fook, to contest the seat in the coming election.

The younger Wong is SNAP's senior vice-president.

The other new face in SNAP's line-up is the party's secretary-general, Justine Jinggut, who will be replacing vice-president Geman Itam in the Melaun seat.

SNAP will be fielding its incumbent assemblymen Peter Nansian (Tasik Biru), Peter Nyarok Anak Entrie (Krian), William Mawan Ikom (Pakan), Entrie Anak Muran (Marudi) and Dr Judson Sakai Tagal (Ba Kelalan).

It was at the Sept 7-8, 1996 State election that the SNAP president announced that it would be his last before retiring. He won the seat uncontested.

Wong was first elected to the Council Negeri (as the State Assembly was then known) in 1956 during the colonial rule. He won the seat in the State's first direct election in 1969 and went on to retain it until the last election.

Wong was also Sarawak's first Deputy Chief Minister.

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