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Dr M: Umno backing only for Barisan Nasional candidates

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today reiterated that Umno will not be backing any aspirant in the coming Sarawak polls except those contesting under the Barisan Nasional banner.

The Prime Minister, who is also BN chairman, said those using Umno's name to garner support should cease immediately.

"I want to state Umno is not involved in the State election. We are not supporting any party claiming to represent us or had our support," he said when asked about reports quoting Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud as saying there were rumours of Umno backing certain quarters to contest against him.

Taib, who is Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) president, is contesting the Balingian seat.

Dr Mahathir, speaking to reporters after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting at the Putra World Trade Centre, said Umno members who contested as independents would no longer be considered party members.

When opening the Upko seventh annual congress in Kota Kinabalu on July 31, he had said Umno had nothing to do with those who intended to contest as independent candidates in the State polls.

He said Umno was committed to the BN and did not "stab its partners in the back".

Dr Mahathir confirmed he had endorsed the candidates' list submitted by Abdul Taib recently.

Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had also issued a similar reminder on Aug 13. Those claiming their actions and activities were endorsed or supported by Umno were telling lies.

On Aug 8, former Defence Minister Datuk Abang Abu Bakar Mustapha said a group headed by him would contest in 45 seats in the election. They are contesting as independent candidates, in a move to bring Umno to Sarawak.

Abang Abu Bakar said if the independents were to win and form the next government, they would welcome Umno to Sarawak with open arms.

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