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Taib: BN candidates for Sarawak election finalised

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KUCHING, Tues. - The Sarawak Barisan Nasional has finalised the list of 62 candidates for the State election, Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud said today.

He said he would send the list to BN chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad when the latter returned from overseas.

"I cannot reveal the list until the Prime Minister has been briefed," said Taib.

He did not say when he would be meeting Dr Mahathir, who is returning next week.

Taib said this at a Press conference after opening a one-day BN seminar for the Bidayuh community at the Institut Pertanian Semenggok, near here, today.

Among those present were his two deputies, Tan Sri Dr George Chan Hong Nam and Tan Sri Alfred Jabu.

Taib's disclosure has fuelled speculation that he will dissolve the State Assembly in the middle of next month although the term of the assembly only expires on Nov 18.

The Sarawak BN comprises Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu, Sarawak United Peoples' Party, Sarawak National Party and Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak.

In the 1996 election, the BN won 58 seats; the DAP, two; and Independents, two.

Asked to comment on the recent warning by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi that no one outside the BN should use Umno's name to garner support in the election, Taib said he was thankful to Abdullah for making clear the stand of Umno.

He said what Abdullah did was consistent with the spirit of co-operation within the BN family.

"If any party still wants to use Umno's name, I will leave it to the rakyat to decide."

Earlier in his speech, Taib said the new BN candidate for Tanjung Datu would be a Bidayuh. Tanjung Datu's incumbent, Datuk Ramsay Noel Jitam, is an Iban.

This will bring the number of BN Bidayuh candidates to six from five. The present ones are Roland Sagah (Tarat), Frederick Bayoi (Kedup), Michael Manyin (Tebedu), William Tanyuh (Bengoh) and Peter Nansian (Tasik Biru).