

Dr M to be consulted on BN candidate for Gaya

By MUGUNTAN VANAR

KOTA KINABALU: Who will be the Barisan Nasional candidate for Gaya will become clearer after Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad returns from his overseas working trip later this week.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the Prime Minister would be consulted before the coalition made a decision.

Speaking to reporters after meeting state Barisan leaders and state Umno leaders here

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yesterday, the Deputy Prime Minister said: "We will take it up when the Prime Minister comes back. After that we will decide who is going to be the candidate."

Five parties of the coalition are reportedly interested to nominate a candidate for the parliamentary by-election on Oct 12. However, it is widely speculated that the seat would be given to the Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) whose president and incumbent in the seat, Datuk Yong Teck

Lee, was disqualified from becoming MP for committing an election offence.

Other parties said to be interested are Umno, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) and the MCA.

Abdullah said the state Barisan meeting, chaired by Chief Minister Datuk Chong Kah Kiat, did not go into details on which party or candidate will contest in Gaya.

However, he added, all nine Barisan component parties in

the state have pledged to work together to ensure victory for any candidate chosen.

Yong said his party felt "comfortable" with its bid to contest the seat again.

"We briefed the Deputy Prime Minister on the situation and expressed our views that the incumbent party (SAPP) be fielded on behalf of the Barisan," he said, after he and several SAPP leaders met Abdullah late Monday night.

Meanwhile, another party has announced that it will chal-

lenge the Barisan in Gaya, along with other parties.

Parti Bersekutu claimed that 11 of its members had offered to contest in the by-election and party secretary-general Felix Akiam said the party will "go it alone."

Parti Keadilan Nasional had earlier said it would put up a candidate unless DAP leader Lim Kit Siang decides to stand on behalf of the opposition. Keadilan's allies, PAS and Parti Rakyat Malaysia, has agreed to this proposal.