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Abdullah-Gaya

BN CANDIDATE FOR GAYA BY-ELECTION TO BE DECIDED BY PRIME MINISTER

KOTA KINABALU, Sept 24 (Bernama) -- The Barisan Nasional (BN) candidate for the Gaya parliamentary by-election will be decided by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad when the prime minister returns from the Asia-Europe Meeting (Asem) in Copenhagen in Denmark, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

"This is a matter that we will take up when the PM comes back from the overseas trip," the deputy prime minister told reporters after attending a special meeting of Sabah BN leaders, here.

He said all the component parties which attended the meeting chaired by state BN chairman Datuk Chong Kah Kiat had agreed to support whomever was selected as the the BN candidate.

"We are confident of the consensus shown and God willing, this will be the biggest victory for this constituency," he said.

Abdullah said the Umno Youth and Wanita wings had made progress in efforts to ensure that the names on the party's electoral role were the same as those on the electoral roll used by the Election Commission (EC).

"We want to ensure that there's no confusion. We hope that the EC will inform us as quickly as possible about the electoral roll that it is using," he said.

He said that the BN did not want to see voters who were already in the party's list not being able to cast their votes because their names were not on the EC's list.

The Gaya seat fell vacant after its MP, Datuk Yong Teck Lee, the Sabah Progressive Party (Sapp) president, was disqualified following the Election Court's ruling that he had committed corrupt practices during the 1999 general election.

Nominations have been fixed for Oct 3 and polling will be on Oct 12 in the event of a contest.

In the last general election, Yong polled 15,315 votes to beat two other candidates with a 4,117-vote majority. Gaya has 49,426 voters.

Meanwhile, Yong told reporters after the meeting that he met Abdullah last night to convey the Sapp's views that the BN should field a candidate from the party in the by-election.

He also mentioned the names of potential candidate from the Sapp, he said.

Asked whether he was confident that the BN would field a candidate from his party, he said: "We are comfortable with the situation as it is."

-- BERNAMA

JS JK