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Gaya candidate: PM to be consulted

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KOTA KINABALU, Tues. - Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the BN's candidate for the Gaya parliamentary by-election will be announced after Prime Minister and BN chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has been consulted.

"This is a matter that we will take up with the Prime Minister when he comes back from overseas," he said at a Press conference after a meeting with the State BN here today.

The meeting was attended by State BN chairman Datuk Chong Kah Kiat, who is also Liberal Democratic Party president, Sabah Umno chief Datuk Musa Aman and Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) president Datuk Yong Teck Lee, who was disqualified as Gaya MP resulting in the by-election.

Also present were Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) president Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan, United Pasok Momogun Kadazandusun Organisation (Upko) deputy president Datuk Wilfred Bumburing and Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS) president Tan Sri Joseph Kurup.

Others present were Sabah MCA chairman Datuk Edward Khoo, Sabah Gerakan chairman Robin Loh and Sabah MIC chief V. Jothi.

On whether BN had identified the potential candidate, Abdullah said the meeting did not go into details.

He said with the existing strength and unity in the State BN, it should win with a huge majority.

"The BN has started preparing for the by-election," Abdullah said.

The by-election is being called after Yong was forced to vacate the seat following the Federal Court's decision to reject his application for leave to appeal against a Court of Appeal's ruling upholding the Election Court's finding that he had committed corrupt practices in the 1999 State election.

The Election Commission has fixed nomination for the by-election on Oct 3 and polling on Oct 12.

In the 1999 general election, Yong obtained 15,315 votes to defeat Johnny Goh of PBS who polled 11,198 votes.

Before the meeting with the State BN, Abdullah met with the Sabah Umno liaison committee.

Abdullah, who is Umno deputy president, said as in the past, all State Umno liaison committees would campaign for the BN candidate in the by-election.

He said that the Umno youth and women movements would go through the electoral roll for Gaya to ensure that all eligible voters are able to cast their votes on polling day.

Umno will ask for a copy of the electoral roll for the Gaya constituency to enable the party to prepare voting slips to be given out to all the registered voters.