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Chong-Gaya

THREE BN PARTIES KEEN TO CONTEST GAYA

KOTA KINABALU, Sept 25 (Bernama) -- At least three Sabah Barisan Nasional (BN) component parties have indicated their interest to represent the ruling coalition in the Gaya parliamentary by-election next month.

"I know that there are three component parties which are interested, that is (to say) Umno, SAPP (Sabah Progressive Party) and PBS (Parti Bersatu Sabah)," Chief Minister Datuk Chong Kah Kiat said today.

Speaking to reporters after chairing the weekly state Cabinet meeting, Chong, who is Sabah BN chairman, said despite this he did not think the selection of the BN candidate would become a controversy.

"I think it is a straightforward matter, nothing contentious. I don't expect any controversy," he said.

Asked whether the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) which he heads was interested in contesting, Chong said: "No...we are not."

He said all component parties had agreed to leave it to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to decide on the candidate, whose name is expected to be announced one or two days before nomination day on Oct 3. Polling has been set for Oct 12.

The Gaya seat fell vacant after SAPP president Datuk Yong Teck Lee was disqualified as the MP following the Election Court's ruling that he had committed corrupt practices during the 1999 state election where he contested and won the Likas seat.

Yong also lost the Likas seat because of the court ruling but a by-election need not be held because the state election is due to be held in less than two years.

In the 1999 general election, Yong polled 15,315 votes to win by a 4,117-vote majority in a three-cornered fight in Gaya, which has 49,426 voters, including 73 postal voters.

Chong said because of the Gaya by-election, the state Cabinet today decided to defer the State Assembly sitting by a week.

The tabling of the State 2003 Budget has been rescheduled from Oct 17 to Oct 24.

The Cabinet also endorsed the increase in the number of state assembly seats from 48 to 60 as proposed in the Election Commission's redelineation exercise.

-- BERNAMA

JS YBY