

**BN to announce Pujut candidate after Gawai**  
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**State BN chairman Abang Johari Openg says a meeting will be held to decide on the candidate after the Gawai celebration.**

KUCHING: Sarawak Barisan Nasional (BN) will hold a meeting in due course to decide on its preparations and candidate for the Pujut state by-election, says Chief Minister Abang Johari Openg.

Abang Johari, who is the state BN chairman, said the coalition was not in a hurry and would announce its candidate after the coming Gawai celebration.

BN is expected to win the by-election, he said when met by reporters at the state legislative assembly building here today.

The Election Commission, following a meeting today, set June 20 for nomination and July 4 for polling.

The by-election is being held after the disqualification of DAP state assemblyman Dr Ting Tiong Choon on May 12 by the state assembly, which had cited his alleged Australian citizenship.

Seventy BN representatives supported the motion tabled by Second Finance Minister Wong Soon Koh, who is also United People's Party (UPP) president, a state BN-friendly party. Meanwhile, all 10 members of the opposition voted against it.

In the 11th Sarawak state election last year, Ting won the seat with a majority of 1,759 votes, beating BN's Hii King Chiong, Jofri Jaraiee of PAS and independent candidate Fong Pau Teck.

Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) president Dr Sim Kui Hian meanwhile said the party was prepared for the by-election.

He said he believed that Pujut, a BN seat traditionally allocated to SUPP, would be given to his party based on the BN spirit and consensus.

"We welcome any aspirant who claims he/she is a much stronger candidate than ours. But he/she will have to join us. If he/she is a member of another component or BN-friendly party, he/she will have to resign from his/her party in order to contest.

"This by-election is so unexpected. It is about candidates with integrity and sincerity. The campaigning period is also unusual for the state as it is during the Muslim fasting month, but we are prepared,' he said.

“We have several candidates whom we are grooming for the parliamentary elections. One of them can be fielded in Pujut.”

Sarawak DAP chairman Chong Chieng Jen, at a press conference later, said the by-election was unfair to his party as the Election Petition Court had also dismissed a petition brought up by UPP after the state election.

He accused BN of having used its might in the assembly to deprive the 8,899 voters who had supported Ting, who he said had done a good job serving the constituents.

Nonetheless, he said, the party would take part in the by-election and would hold a meeting soon to decide on its candidate.

He also said the party’s team of lawyers would go to court over Ting’s disqualification.

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