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Sarawak-election (News Focus)

CAN SARAWAK FORM GOVT ON NOMINATION DAY?

KUCHING, JULY 29 (Bernama) -- It is indeed not far-fetching to say that the Barisan Nasional (BN) could easily form the Sarawak state government on nomination day itself, if state election scheduled for this year is announced.

Political observers here speculated on the anticipated victory based on several factors, including the lack of major issues that the opposition could harp on.

Coupled with the overwhelming people support for the coalition, particularly from the Melanau Malays or Muslims to the ruling Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) Sarawak, an armchair victory for the BN is expected.

This over-optimism stems from the landslide victory in the 1995 General Elections (Sarawak's parliamentary elections) when BN candidates won 27 parliamentary seats unopposed.

That flattering win, observers say, paved the way for the central BN to form the government. The Sarawak BN now controls all 56 state seats with the PBB holding 27, Parti Rakyat Bersatu Sarawak (SUPP) 16, Parti Kebangsaan Sarawak (SNAP), six and Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS), seven.

On Saturday, Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud said he would announce the dissolution of the State Legislative Assembly (to allow for the state election) only after discussing with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad here next month.

Dr Mahathir is scheduled for an official two-day visit to Sarawak on Aug 7 and 8.

Taib needs to announce the dissolution of the state assembly latest by Nov 28 for state election to be held within 60 days.

For the coming elections, six more seats will be created to make a total of 62 with PBB receiving three, SUPP and PBDS each receiving a seat. (NOTE:::REMAINING SEAT NOT STATED FOR WHICH PARTY''''''''')

Observers also noted that while in the 1991 state election, PBDS was the only opposition party capable of shaking the BN, the scenario has changed with the party now vowing allegiance for the BN.

Whatever opposition, if any, would come from the almost defunct Parti Negara and the DAP, observers said.

Parti Negara which failed to name even one candidate in the last state election, is fighting for survival.

Yet, only the DAP which suffered a humiliating defeat in the 1991 elections, could have a realistic chance in four constituencies.

In this regard, observers predicted a tough time for Snap and SUPP to retain their seats.

"Whereas the rest of BN component candidates only need to register their nomination papers", an observer said. The Melanau Malays were firmly behind the PBB, an observer said.

"Barring anyone from the coalition becoming an Independent, the possibility of the BN winning all 62 seats uncontested looks imminent," he added. -- BERNAMA

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