

20/02/1997

Nomination day is March 5 for Sarawak seat

Ramlan Said; Paddy Ang

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The Election Commission has fixed March 5 as nomination day for the Bukit Begunan by-election, and in the event of a contest, polling will be held on March 15 and 16.

Commission chairman Datuk Harun Din said today the 1995 electoral roll containing 10,926 voters would be used in the by-election.

The by-election is being held following an Election Court decision on Feb 13 declaring the result for the seat in the 1996 Sarawak State election as null and void on grounds of bribery and corrupt practices.

In that contest, Barisan Nasional candidate Mong anak Dagang secured 4,891 votes to beat Independent candidate Donald Lawan by 2,165 votes. Donald polled 2,726 votes.

Meanwhile, Harun said the commission was studying the possibility of amending several election regulations to ensure they were not dated.

He said among these were those related to nomination procedures which attracted complaints and caused confusion among candidates.

"The nomination form has been made very much simpler, but now we are going to make it even simpler as we want to ensure those eligible to contest are not denied their rights."

Harun felt certain areas of the procedures were "a bit untidy" and led to different interpretations of the law by election officers and candidates.

In Kuching, Sulok Tawie reports that the Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak is ready for the by-election and has re-activated its election machinery.

Its vice-president, Dr James Masing, said he would be meeting the party's grassroots leaders to gear them up for the by-election.

On the candidate, Masing said the party's supreme council would finalise the name on Sunday.

"It will be submitted to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud for their endorsement," he said.

He assured voters that the candidate would be clean and free from corrupt practices.

Meanwhile, Mong said that it was up to PBDS and the State BN's leadership to decide whether he should be renominated to contest.

"I leave the matter entirely to them. I will accept whatever decision they make."

He said the court had already ruled that he was free from corrupt practices.

The Sarawak DAP has not ruled out the possibility of contesting in the by-election "just to educate the voters on the vice of money politics".

Its State committee member and State Assemblyman for Bukit Assek, Richard Wong Ho Leng, claimed money politics was rampant in Bukit Begunan.

"We know that we have a very slim chance of winning because the constituency is an Iban majority area. We just want to educate the voters on the vice of money politics."

He said among the party's potential candidates were Cheng Hui Hung, the lawyer who represented Donald in the election petition.

(END)