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All set for Sabah polls (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - With the Sabah elections imminent, the all-important date for the dissolution of the State Legislative Assembly to pave the way for the polls has been decided.

The date was agreed upon at a meeting today between State Barisan Nasional leaders led by Chief Minister Tan Sri Bernard Dompok and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. Dr Mahathir is BN chairman.

Approached by reporters on his return to Kota Kinabalu, Sabah Umno chief Datuk Osu Sukam, who was part of the delegation, said:

"We (Sabah BN leaders) have a fair idea when the Assembly is to be dissolved."

Today's meeting also finalised the allocation of seats among BN component parties.

When a reporter suggested that the Assembly might be dissolved a week after Hari Raya, Osu said: "That you will have to ask the State BN chairman (Dompok)."

While the dissolution is decided by the Government of the day, the subsequent dates like nominations and actual polling will be determined by the Election Commission.

Under the State Constitution, the Chief Minister has to advise the Yang di-Pertua Negeri on the dissolution, after which, the Speaker will inform the Election Commission. The five-year term of the current 48-member Assembly elected on Feb 18 and 19, 1994, ends on March 18.

Umno has 21 seats in the Assembly followed by Dompok's Parti Demokratik Sabah (11), Sabah Progressive Party (five), Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat (three), Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (two), MCA (one), independent (one) and Parti Bersatu Sabah (four).

In addition, PBS has three nominated assemblymen, Umno (two) and SAPP (one).

Elaborating on the meeting, Osu said that as Sabah Umno head, he was happy with its outcome. At the meeting, all BN component party leaders expressed their views on the coming election.

"We (Sabah BN component leaders) also informed the Prime Minister we are ready for the election," he said.

Osu, who is State Finance Minister, said election strategies were also discussed at the two-hour meeting with Dr Mahathir.

The other leaders at the meeting were Datuk Yong Teck Lee (SAPP), Datuk Pandikar Amin Mulia (Akar), Datuk Seri Joseph Kurup (PBRS), Datuk Chong Kah Kiat (LDP), Datuk Chau Tet On (MCA), V. Jothi (MIC) and Tan Sri Soon Siew Hong (Gerakan).

The Sabah BN leaders were rather tight-lipped when approached in Kuala Lumpur soon after the meeting with the Prime Minister.

"We discussed politics and implementation of projects," said Kurup.

When asked about the date of the dissolution, Kurup merely said: "You should have asked the Chief Minister." Dompok's car did not stop at the gates where reporters were waiting.

The meeting at the Prime Minister's Department started about 9am. It was also attended by BN secretary-general Datuk Mohamed Rahmat.

(END)