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Sabah-Reaction

DISSOLUTION BRINGS RELIEF TO SABAH POLITICIANS

KOTA KINABALU, Feb 22 (Bernama) -- Politicians from both the Barisan Nasional and the opposition heaved a sigh of relief over the much-awaited dissolution of the Sabah Legislative Assembly today.

They have been speculating for weeks on the date of the dissolution and of the election that will follow.

Indeed, the election had been the main topic of conversation among many ordinary Sabahans and dominated the headlines in the local newspapers.

"The dissolution was long-awaited and will surely be welcomed by the people and all political parties," said Sabah MCA chairman Datuk Chau Tet On shortly after Chief Minister Tan Sri Bernard Dompok made the announcement.

Dompok himself admitted to reporters that he was "greatly relieved".

Datuk Harris Salleh, the acting president of Bersekutu, said: "Sabahans have waited for more than a year for this election."

The Election Commission is scheduled to meet in Kuala Lumpur tomorrow to fix the dates for nomination and polling.

Sabah Umno chief Datuk Osu Sukam said he would meet party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad soon to inform him of the candidates the party would be fielding.

Osu said if more than one BN component party was eyeing a particular seat they would compromise in the spirit of BN.

Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS) president Datuk Joseph Kurup said today's announcement had put to rest speculations that the dissolution might be deferred due to disagreement among the BN components over seat allocation.

He concurred with Osu that such differences could be resolved in the BN spirit.

Akar, another BN component, said the dissolution was accepted by all components of the coalition in the state.

Its president Datuk Pandikar Amin Mulia said the BN had long awaited the opportunity to obtain a fresh mandate from the people for continued development in the state.

Pandikar Amin, who is the assemblyman for Tempasuk, said Akar would abide by the BN's decision on seat allocations.

"We hope to at least defend the three states we are holding, Tempasuk, Matunggong and Malalap (previously known as Tenom)," he said.

MCA's Chau, the party's sole representative in the just-dissolved assembly, hoped to defend the Api-Api seat which he won in 1994 on a PBS ticket.

He said the MCA had requested two other Chinese-majority seats, Sri Tanjung dan Karamunting, where the incumbents are Datuk Michael Lim and Lau Pui Keong.

Both won the seats on a PBS ticket but Lim later crossed over to the Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP), a BN component, while Lau left the PBS to become an independent.

For Harris Salleh, the dissolution was made at the "best time".

He said his Bersekutu party would field candidates in all 48 constituencies and register an upset win, taking 30 to 40 seats.

Sabah PAS Commissioner Muhammad bin Tingka said the party was not surprised by today's announcement having predicted that the assembly would be dissolved this month.

PAS, which lost all three seats it contested in the 1994 election, would field 10 candidates this time, he said.

-- BERNAMA

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