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Election-Sarawak

DR MAHATHIR TO MEET SARAWAK BN LEADERS NEXT MONTH

KUCHING, July 5 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohammad is expected to meet Sarawak Barisan Nasional (BN) leaders and assess developments in the state during a working visit scheduled for early next month.

Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud said today that Dr Mahathir would probably assess the BN prospects in the run-up to the coming general election.

The state government was making preparations for his visit, he told reporters after chairing the monthly Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) supreme council meeting at the PBB headquarters at Jalan Bako here.

Abdul Taib who is also state BN chairman and PBB president said that PBB, the backbone of the state BN was ready for the election as any other BN party.

On PBB's candidate line-up, he said it would be confirmed after quiet consultation among its leaders as well as after a thorough survey of grassroot voters had been conducted.

"We do not have open discussions on candidate list in the PBB... it has never been our style. It has been our practice all along to do a thorough survey on the ground because we respect the feelings of the voters," he said.

In the general election of 1995, the PBB won 10 of the 26 seats secured by the Sarawak BN. The opposition DAP grabbed the Bintulu seat. Sarawak then had 27 Parliamentary seats and the number has since increased to 28 following the delineation of electoral boundaries.

On the mid-term state cabinet reshuffle, he said it would be announced as soon as the civil service and government organisations had revamped their lists of responsibilities.

Abdul Taib however would not say if the reshuffle, which was expected to focus on restructuring ministerial responsibilities pertaining to urbanisation, would be made before or after the election.

In confirming the cabinet reshuffle last May, he had denied widespread speculation that at least two cabinet ministers would be dropped.

State Industrial Development Minister Datuk Abang Johari Tun Abang Openg who is PBB deputy president and Housing Minister Datuk Celestine Ujang, PBB senior vice-president --- the two ministers widely speculated to be dropped were present at today's meeting.

-- BERNAMA

CJ AAM