

22 FEB 1999  
Sabah-Dissolve  
SABAH LEGISLATURE DISSOLVED FOR FRESH POLLS

KOTA KINABALU, Feb 22 (Bernama) -- The Sabah Legislative Assembly was dissolved today to pave the way for the ninth state election that has been expected for months.

The announcement of the dissolution by Chief Minister Tan Sri Bernard Dompok at 12.08pm was telecast live over RTM from the state assembly building.

" I hereby officially declare the dissolution of the Sabah State Legislative Assembly today. All the best," he told a packed news conference at the state assembly building.

He said it was now up to the Election Commission to fix the dates for nomination and polling.

" It's up to the people of Sabah to decide who should form the next state government after the election," said Dompok, who was flanked by state cabinet ministers after their last weekly meeting.

Dompok, who is also chairman of the ruling Sabah Barisan Nasional (BN), had earlier met Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Sakaran Dandai at the Istana Negeri here to get his consent to dissolve the 48-seat legislature.

Soon after calling on Sakaran, Dompok chaired the state cabinet meeting before adjourning to the Rafflesia Room at the same building to make the much-awaited announcement which was greeted with applause by his cabinet colleagues.

Speaking to reporters later, Dompok said he informed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on the dissolution this morning.

The previous 1994 election was on Feb 18 and 19, 39 days after the dissolution on Jan 10.

The current five-year mandate of the assembly ends on March 18.

In the just-dissolved assembly, the BN had 43 seats while the opposition Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS), four. The remaining one seat was held by an Independent.

Besides the 48 elected seats, the assembly also had six Nominated Assemblymen, three each by BN and PBS.

The PBS won the last state election with 25 seats for a simple majority but the state government collapsed after only three weeks in power when most of its assemblymen defected to the BN which then formed the state government.

On the seat allocation for BN component parties, Dompok said it would be known on nomination day.

" Candidates will be decided by the BN leadership but in principle, I think component parties have no major differences. The question of candidates and other problems, if there are any, can be resolved," he said.

The seat allocation for Sabah BN is among seven component parties comprising Umno, PDS, SAPP, Akar, PBRs, LDP and MCA. Two other components -- MIC and Gerakan -- have decided not to contest in the polls.

Besides BN, four other parties have confirmed their participation in the polls in which 726,690 registered voters are eligible to exercise their electoral rights.

PBS, the main opposition party, and Bersekutu (Parti Barisan Rakyat Sabah Bersekutu) have announced that they would field candidates in all the 48 seats.

PAS and Pasok, the oldest political party in Sabah, have also confirmed their participation in the election.

A total of 153 candidates contested in the last election.

-- BERNAMA

JS/AU TS