

State **Assembly** dissolution looks imminent

By **DIANA ROSE** and **PHILIP GOLINGAI**

KUCHING: All signs point to a dissolution of the Sarawak Legislative Assembly next week to pave the way for polling in the 62 state constituencies.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud met Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday, heightening speculation that the dissolution was imminent.

Taib, who is state coalition chairman, is believed to have finalised the list of candidates for endorsement by Dr Mahathir who is the Barisan Nasional chief.

The speculation is that the assembly could be dissolved as early as Sept 3 for the eighth state elections to be

concluded within a fortnight.

On Monday, the Chief Minister's Department announced that the birthday of the Yang di-Pertua Negri will be held on Sept 15 instead of Sept 8 and this sparked off talk that the assembly may be dissolved around that time.

All the four Sarawak Barisan component parties have finalised their candidates for the elections which has to be held before the end of the five-year term of the state government on Nov 8.

At least 14 new faces are expected to be fielded by Sarawak Barisan where Taib's Parti Pesaka Bumiputra (PBB) is the backbone of the coalition.

The other coalition partners are the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS)

and Sarawak National Party (SNAP).

They have agreed to a seat distribution formula of PBDS 30, SUPP 17, PBDS eight and SNAP seven.

In the current assembly, PBB has 29 seats, SUPP 14, PBDS eight and SNAP seven with Independents having three and DAP one.

Among those who are staying out or dropped are two state ministers - (Environment and Public Health Minister Datuk Amar James Wong Kim Min and Housing Minister Datuk Celestine Ujang), an assistant minister for agriculture and food industry Datuk Ramsay Noel Jitam and a federal minister (Agriculture Minister Datuk Effendi Norwawi).

SUPP will be fielding six new faces followed by PBB

five, SNAP two and PBDS one.

The Barisan line-up will also include three women.

In preparing for the elections, all leave for the Sarawak police force have also been temporarily frozen while the Election Commission is also fully prepared.

"We want to provide a full force. We do not want the public to harbour any fear in exercising their constitutional right," said Acting Sarawak Police Commissioner SAC I Dr Yusoff Nook when urging police personnel to play their role effectively to ensure a smooth election process.

The opposition parties' candidates in nearly all the seats are from Parti Keadilan Nasional, PAS, DAP and a group of independents.

They are still bickering over the allocation of seats.