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## Landslide win seen for BN in Sarawak

KUCHING, Wed. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today urged the people of Sarawak to return the Barisan Nasional to power as it is the only party that can protect the rights of all races.

The Prime Minister said the BN had successfully demonstrated that it could protect the rights of all races.

"No other party has the BN's principles tailored to safeguard the rights of the various races and ethnic groups so that they would not be afraid of their rights being taken away from them," he said in his message to Sarawakians which was aired live over TV1. (Full report on Page 6.)

As the people of Sarawak go to the polls tomorrow to elect the new State Government, observers on the sidelines have predicted a landslide victory for the Barisan Nasional.

Meanwhile punters who put their money where their mouths are have labelled Opposition and Independent candidates as underdogs and have given them handicaps of up to 3,000 votes against the BN candidates.

Fifty-eight seats are being contested. Four seats have been won uncontested by the Barisan Nasional on nomination day. There are Batu Kawa, Batang Ai, Katibas and Ba'Kelalan.

Apart from the BN's 58 candidates, the others in the fray are Parti Keadilan Nasional (25), DAP (13), State Reform Party or STAR (five), Pas (three) and 63 independents.

Keadilan, STAR and Pas are making their debut in this election.

There are a total of 815,932 people eligible to cast their votes tomorrow.

In total, there are 868,487 registered voters in Sarawak.

Election Commission chairman Datuk Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman said here today the campaigning period ends at 12 midnight.

Abdul Rashid said he believed polling would be carried out smoothly.

"We predict 70 per cent of the registered voters will go out to cast their votes compared to 65 per cent during the last election in 1996," he told a Press conference at the Election Commission office in Jalan Simpang Tiga.

He said 1,592 voting centres involving 2,089 channels would be opened to enable the people to cast their votes.

From that, 991 are schools, 336 are longhouses, 119 community centres and 116 other places.

Abdul Rashid advised all voters to go out to cast their votes without any fear. He said the polling centres would be opened from 7.30am to 5pm.

"The voters need not fear as nobody can stop them from exercising their right to vote.

"Those prevented from voting should lodge a police report," he said adding that voters should come out early and not wait for the last minute.

He said the commission had allocated RM22.2 million to ensure the smooth run of the election, adding that a big portion of it was for transportation.

Abdul Rashid said two aircraft, 40 helicopters, 3,100 cars, 845 boats and 25 express boats would be used. The commission has also employed 14,000 people for the election.

He said the first result was expected at 8.30pm and by 11pm, all the results should be known.

The people can obtain the latest information on the election by visiting

www.spr.gov.my.

Meanwhile, State Election officer Wan Alwi Datuk Wan Hashim said the four constituencies with the largest number of voters are Pending (29,097), Pelawan (28,722), Batu Lintang (28,293) and Senadin (28,132).

He added the constituencies with the least number of voters are Belaga (6,476), Sadong Jaya (7,506) and Ngemah (7,709).

He said three largest constituencies are Belaga (19,453 sq km), Telang Usan (15,386 sq km) and Baleh (12,364sq km).

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