

03 SEP 2001
Sarawak-Dissolve
SARAWAK STATE ASSEMBLY DISSOLVED

KUCHING, Sept 3 (Bernama) -- The Sarawak Legislative Assembly was dissolved today, more than two months ahead of its expiry, to pave the way for the eighth state election.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud said the Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Abang Haji Muhammad Salahuddin Abang Barieng had consented to the dissolution of the 62-member House.

Earlier the Chief Minister had an hour-long audience with Tun Salahuddin at Astana Negeri here. He was accompanied by State Attorney-general Datuk J. C Fong and State Secretary Datuk Haji Abdul Aziz Hussain.

Abdul Taib said Assembly Speaker Datuk Awang Asfia Awang Nassar would be officially informed of the dissolution of the House.

Speaking at his office here, the Chief Minister said the Secretary of the Assembly would then inform the Election Commission which in turn would conduct the state election within 60 days from now.

Sarawak has a total of 861,377 voters.

"I feel the people have had enough time to ponder on the question of the election...there is no surprise for them anymore," said Abdul Taib, who is Sarawak Barisan Nasional Chairman and President of the Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB), the backbone of the State BN.

He nevertheless advised the people to maintain the tradition of peaceful and smooth elections in Sarawak.

"The election is not a time for quarrelling but a period when we present the people with all the information which will help them make the best decision," he said.

The Chief Minister was flanked at the news conference by PBB Deputy President and Deputy Chief Minister Tan Sri Alfred Jabu and Tan Sri George Chan, who is also Deputy Chief Minister and President of the Sarawak United Peoples Party (SUPP). Also present were Sarawak National Party (SNAP) President Datuk Amar James Wong and Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS) Information Chief Datuk Dr James Jemut Masing.

The BN had 58 seats in the assembly which was dissolved 77 days ahead of its expiry. Independents held three seats and one was by the DAP.

On the Sarawak BN manifesto, Abdul Taib said, "The manifesto will be ready sometime just before nomination, I don't know when the nomination is."

"The theme for the election is simple, we want to continue whatever good things we have done..... and make sure that the people are prepared... to intensify their efforts to switch over to the new economy," he said.

He said the manifesto would be based on the BN policies at national level but would stress more on the ways of preparing the Sarawak people for even more economic development involving high technology and value added products.

He said the BN candidates would have close grassroot links with enhanced quality.

Asked on the number of new faces to be fielded by the BN, he said it would be quite a good proportion and promised that he would speak more about them in a few days time.

To another question, he said he had more or less made up his mind on the list of candidates which he had discussed with Prime Minister and BN

Chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Asked if there were any obstacles in the way of the BN making a clean sweep of all 62 seats in the election, Abdul Taib said: "My crystal ball is not 100 per cent correct, so I won't like to commit myself to any statement that can impinge on prediction about 100 per cent victory but I can say we have all reason to hope for one."

"I believe our people will give priority to the question of development for they know they have chosen us as the government all this while because they believe we can fulfil their hopes, though not 100 per cent, but in a way that can change their fate," he said.

The Chief Minister said the people could see the changes and realise that such development should be stepped up in view of the ever increasing expectations.

"The situation in Sarawak has changed a lot.....many places are accessible via a good transport system and the communication system is also good," he said.

To a question of whether the Sarawak BN would ask Umno to take action against any of its members standing as independents in the state election, Abdul Taib said Umno was well aware of its duty.

He said going by procedure Umno would automatically sack any of its members standing against BN candidates not only in Sarawak but anywhere else in the country.

"But our problem here, I don't think will be of that nature but more of someone trying to put on an Umno shirt while not being Umno inside the shirt," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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