

PBDS group plans gathering

STAR 15. 7. 2003

KUCHING: Parti Bansa Bayak Sarawak (PBDS) leaders, shut out of nominations for party elections in the forthcoming triennial delegates conference, have planned a big gathering in Bintulu as a show of strength a day before the Prime Minister's visit to Sarawak.

The gathering dubbed "Suara Rakyat" (Voice of the People) will be staged on July 24 by Datuk Dr James Masing's group.

"It is to re-assess our grassroots support.

"Between 1,500 and 1,600 branch leaders from the party's main, youth and women's wings are expected to attend," said the party's former secretary-general Dublin Unting, who is aligned to Dr Masing.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is scheduled to open Miri Airport terminal's extension project on July 25.

The gathering is the first by Dr Masing's camp after his

rivals Datuk Daniel Tajem and Datuk Joseph Sallang were declared uncontested winners of the party's president and deputy-president posts respectively last Friday.

Tajem's and Sallang's men also won the three vice-president's posts and 15 supreme council seats without contest.

Dr Masing's group claimed that nominations for the party elections were carried out without its knowledge.

Unting, who is also state Assistant Minister for Social Development and Urbanisation as well as Tourism, said that Dr Masing's camp had more support from the grassroots than Tajem, a former Deputy Chief Minister.

"We have 177 branches supporting us, and there are nine YBs (elected representatives) in our group.

"They have only four YBs, excluding Datuk Amar Leo

Moggie (Energy, Communications and Multimedia Minister)," he said in an interview yesterday.

Asked if Dr Masing's group would attend the party's triennial delegates' conference on July 26 and 27, Unting said they had not been notified.

"We will cross the bridge when we come to it," he said.

Party credentials committee chairman Datuk Dr Jawie Masing has accredited 153 out of more than 250 branches as eligible to attend the conference.

On a call by 17 PBDS branches in Kuching and Samarahan Divisions asking Dr James Masing, state Assistant Minister in the Chief Minister's Office Joseph Entulu and himself to quit their state Cabinet positions, Unting said the appointment of Cabinet members was the Chief Minister's prerogative.