

**Sarawak Assembly To Be Dissolved On Monday Says Taib**  
**Malaysianmirror.com**  
**March 19, 2011**

KUCHING -- The Sarawak state legislative assembly will be dissolved on Monday to pave the way for the 10th state election, Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud said today.

Taib, who is also state Barisan Nasional (BN) chairman, said he had called on Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Abang Muhammad Salahuddin Abang Barieng on Thursday to get his consent to dissolve the state assembly.

"There will be a gazette notification on March 21," he told a joint news conference with Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak and Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin at the conclusion of the nation's top two leaders' joint visit to Sarawak as part of the nation-wide meet-the-people tour.

The Election Commission (EC) would decide on the dates for the nomination and polling, Taib said, ending months of speculations on the state election.

The current term of the 71-member state assembly expires on July 23. The last state election was held on May 20, 2006.

Taib, who marks his 30th year in office on March 26, also expressed his intention to step down as the chief minister, saying he had intended to do so since 2006 but had to postpone it because it did not work out.

Asked if a handover to a new state leadership was expected by mid-term, he said it was possible.

"It is possible. I hope everyone is agreeable," said Taib, adding that he would defend his state seat of Balingian besides leading the BN machinery in the upcoming state election following requests by the BN's top leadership.

Asked on the same issue, Najib said Taib needed some time to identify his successor and ensure the leadership transition take place in a manner that would ensure stability and continuity.

"I've spoken in a frank manner that Taib and I have an understanding that what is important is an orderly and smooth transition," he said.

To ensure that there would not be any conflict, he said Taib, who is Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) president, had been tasked to lead the BN in the coming election.

"When the right time comes, he (Taib) will inform me," the BN chairman said.

Yesterday Taib told reporters to wait for one more day for him to make an election-related announcement after speculation on the dissolution of the state assembly went into high gear following his meeting with the Yang Dipertua Negeri.

At present, the state BN controls 63 of the 71 state seats after Engkilili state assembly Dr Jonical Rayong Ngipa, who contested under the opposition Sarawak National Party (SNAP)

ticket, joined the BN last year.

The DAP holds another six seats while Parti Keadilan Rakyat and Parti Cinta Malaysia (PCM), through an independent assemblyman, hold a seat each.

(Bernama)

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