

Eight political groups name 384 candidates as countdown begins 123 hopefuls announced by liberal team

By CONNIE LAW
and LINDA CHOY

THE United Democrats and Meeting Point will field the largest number of candidates in September's district board elections.

The two parties, which will merge to form the Democratic Party in October, yesterday announced 123 candidates would stand under a joint banner for the 346 seats.

Nominations for the September 18 elections begin today and end on August 15. The poll is the fourth for the district boards, but the first in which all district board members will be elected.

A total of 384 candidates have been announced by eight parties.

Eastern, with 34 seats up for grabs, attracted the highest number of candidates, 40. But only four candidates have expressed interest in going for the six seats in the Islands district.

Secretary for Home Affairs, Michael Suen Ming-yeung, said the 19 district offices were well prepared for a deluge of applications.

Yesterday, a total of 177 members from four political parties announced their candidacy.

UDHK vice-chairman Yeung Sum expected a close fight between the liberals and the pro-China camp, which had become better organised with the emergence of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong.

Mr Yeung said competition would be particularly keen in Kwun Tong, Tai Po, New Territories West and Island East.

Most of the legislators from the two parties would not run, except Dr Huang Chen-ya in Island South and Zachary Wong Wai-yin in New Territories West.

Legislator and chairman of the

Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood, Frederick Fung Kin-kee, is also not on his party's candidate list.

As a member of Legco and the Housing Authority, he wanted to concentrate on territory-wide issues.

Thirty-eight members of the association are to compete in six districts. Mr Fung said they were still persuading Urban Councillor Yim Tin-sang and vice-chairman Bruce Liu Sing-lee to join the fray.

They were aiming at a 100 per cent success rate, because 90 per cent of their candidates had been serving residents for between one and 22 years. He foresaw fierce competition in Tuen Mun, Kwai Tsing and Tseung Kwan O.

The pro-China Hong Kong Progressive Alliance is to field six candidates, the smallest number among various political groups.

Alliance chairman Ambrose Lau Hong-chuen said that was because it was only formed last week.

He said the alliance, whose members include local delegates to the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, had not consulted China or anyone else.

Of the six candidates, one was an incumbent member and two were defeated in previous elections.

Even though China was set to dismantle the three tiers of government, the party still decided to run as it wanted to provide an alternative to the liberal camp.

The Civic Force, led by ex-United Democrat Lau Kong-wah, will field nine candidates in Sha Tin.

The Liberal Party will field at least 86 candidates, the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong 82, the Hong Kong Democratic Foundation eight and the Liberal Democratic Federation 31.

