

DR M: SINK-OR-SWIM PLEDGE STILL HOLDS

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — The Barisan Nasional's "sink or swim with Berjaya" pledge made during the Sabah election campaign "still holds at the moment but I don't know what the future will bring," Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister and Barisan Nasional chairman also said that he would meet Sabah Chief Minister and Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) president Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan "as I understand he wants to meet me."

It is not known yet when Dr Mahathir will meet Datuk Pairin. However, it is understood that former Sabah Chief Minister and Berjaya president Datuk Harris Salleh, who is also Sabah Barisan chief, is scheduled to call on him tomorrow.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters at Subang airport on his return from a three-week official visit to five European countries.

Asked about the attempted power grab by Berjaya and the United Sabah National Organisation (Usno), Dr Mahathir replied: "We will have to know what actually happened. We haven't looked into the matter in great detail.

"I am not aware of any

pact. I have to know more about what happened.

"But these matters could have happened in the heat of the moment and one has to give due consideration to the atmosphere prevailing (then)."

He also stressed that the question of expelling Berjaya did not arise at the moment. "But if PBS joins the Barisan and wants Berjaya to be expelled, we would like to hear from them why they want Berjaya out."

Dr Mahathir said that the Barisan Supreme Council would have to meet first to discuss the PBS application to join the ruling coalition. Asked about his personal views on the matter, he replied: "My personal views don't matter.

"I have to discuss it with other Barisan leaders first and give everyone a chance to air their views. I don't want to influence anyone."

Asked about his reaction when he first heard of Berjaya's defeat in the Sabah election on April 22, he quipped: "I tore out my hair."

After the laughter died down, he said more seriously: "I was disappointed, of course."

He also stressed that he supported Deputy Prime

Minister Datuk Musa Hitam's actions and decisions after the Sabah election and the attempted Berjaya-Usno power grab.

"He was the Acting Prime Minister and he has my full support, of course. He had the authority. I stand squarely behind him."

In the Sabah election, PBS won 25 seats (with one more added when Pasok deputy president Ignatius Malanjum joined the party).

Usno won 16 and Berjaya, which represented the Barisan and went into the campaign with 44 seats, ended up with only six.

Following the results, Datuk Harris teamed up with Usno president Tun Mustapha Datu Harun and persuaded Sabah Yang di-Pertua Negri Tun Adnan Robert to swear in Tun Mustapha as Chief Minister of a minority Berjaya-Usno coalition government.

However, two statements by Datuk Musa that the Federal Government and the Barisan would abide by the wishes of the majority in Sabah helped foil the power grab. Tun Adnan later revoked Tun Mustapha's appointment and Datuk Pairin took the oath of office before the Yang di-Pertua Negri at 8.15p.m. on April 22.