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MAHATHIR-SABAH

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KUALA LUMPUR, MAY 22 (BERNAMA) -- THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS PREPARED TO HAVE THE CONSTITUTION AMENDED TO ALLOW THE SABAH GOVERNMENT TO HAVE UP TO 12 MINISTERS, PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TONIGHT.

THIS WOULD BE DONE SHOULD THERE BE AN OFFICIAL REQUEST, AND APPROVAL OF THE PROPOSAL WOULD DEPEND ON PARLIAMENT, HE TOLD REPORTERS AFTER VISITING THE STAGE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL QURAN READING COMPETITION AT THE PUTRA WORLD CENTRE HERE.

THE SABAH GOVERNMENT HAD INTENDED TO AMEND THE STATE CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF THREE MORE MINISTERS TO BRING THE TOTAL NUMBER OF MINISTERS TO 12, THUS ENABLING IT TO IMPLEMENT THE 5:4:3 FORMULA OF HAVING IN ITS CABINET FIVE KADAZANS, FOUR MUSLIMS AND THREE CHINESE.

HOWEVER, IT WAS FOUND THAT THIS COULD NOT BE DONE UNLESS THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION WAS CORRESPONDINGLY AMENDED.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID SABAH CHIEF MINISTER DATUK JOSEPH PAIRIN KITINGAN HAD DISCUSSED THE MATTER OF THE AMENDMENT WITH ATTORNEY-GENERAL TAN SRI ABU TALIB OSMAN. -- MORE
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BUT THE MATTER WAS NOT RAISED AT THE RECENT MEETING BETWEEN HIM AND DATUK PAIRIN, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID.

ASKED WHETHER THE NEXT MEETING OF THE BARISAN NASIONAL SUPREME COUNCIL WOULD DISCUSS THE ADMISSION OF PARTI BERSATU SABAH (PBS) AND THE UNITED SABAH NATIONAL ORGANISATION (USNO) INTO THE BN, HE REPLIED: +PERHAPS.+

+HOWEVER, I CANNOT DETERMINE THE MATTER BECAUSE THE AGENDA OF THE MEETING HAS NOT BEEN FIXED,+ HE SAID.

ON THE DELEGATION FROM SABAH THAT PLANNED TO MEET HIM FOR HIS BLESSINGS TO HAVE AN UMNO PRESENCE IN THE STATE, HE SAID HE COULD NOT MAKE A DECISION ON THE MATTER BECAUSE IT HAD TO BE DECIDED BY THE UMNO SUPREME COUNCIL. -- BERNAMA
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