

Gerakan didn't intend to quit, says Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad said today that the confusion over the recent reports on the Gerakan's stand over the allocation of seats stemmed from a misunderstanding.

It had never been the Gerakan's intention to go it alone, Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister said Gerakan president Datuk Dr Lim Keng Yaik clarified his stand on the issue at the Barisan Nasional Supreme Council meeting today.

"From his clarification, it was clear that the party had no intention to leave the Barisan," he said.

He said the misunderstanding was also the result of his reported statement on Gerakan's move

to contest the election using its own symbol.

He was reported to have said in Jitra, Kedah, last week that the Barisan Nasional was prepared to allow Gerakan to go on its own if it so wished.

"If the Gerakan wants to contest under its own symbol, let it carry on and we will watch. Let Gerakan leave the coalition and contest on its own," he was reported as saying.

'Not serious'

Dr Mahathir explained today that he had made the statement jokingly to Umno members who asked him about the issue.

"I was not serious about it but it was taken as a statement (by the Press)."

The Prime Minister made the remark follow-

ing a report quoting Datuk Dr Lim as saying that the Gerakan might consider contesting the general election on its own symbol if it did not get a fair deal in the allocation of seats.

Subsequently the Gerakan chief was reported to have said that the party would consider pulling out of the Barisan Nasional if it was not satisfied with the allocation of seats.

It was further reported that this was one of three options to be considered by the party at its central committee meeting on Sunday.

The others were to maintain the status quo and remain in the Barisan; or to remain in the Barisan but contest the elections under its own banner.

Dr Mahathir said statements by various parties on the Gerakan

issue had given the impression that there was a split and misunderstanding among component parties of the Barisan Nasional.

But at today's meeting leaders of the component parties reassured him that they would solve whatever problems that might arise among them through meetings.

"If necessary, we will convene supreme council meetings to find solutions to problems, including those pertaining to the allocation of seats for the general election.

"We are united in facing our political struggle," he added.