

Political solution needed in Sabah, says PM

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By BALAN MOSES

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — The Federal Government will not consider emergency rule as a solution to current problems in Sabah.

This is the assurance the Prime Minister gave today to Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan when the latter gave him an hour-long briefing on the situation in Sabah.

According to Datuk Pairin, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said this was because the problems were political in nature and, thus, needed a political solution.

Besides, the police are also capable of handling the security situation in the State.

"He (Dr Mahathir) assured me that there is no intention of imposing emergency rule in the State as the police can handle the situation. He stated that this is a political problem and must, of necessity, be solved politically," Datuk Pairin told a Press conference this evening.

"He (Dr Mahathir) said although there had been two deaths because of fires, there is no reason for emergency rule."

The Prime Minister, nevertheless, told Datuk Pairin that security in Sabah was a Federal responsibility and that police reinforcements had been sent to the State.

"He assured me that he understood the situation."

Datuk Pairin, who reported the situation in Sabah to Dr Mahathir in the form of a memorandum, told reporters: "I explained to him that allegations by Usno and Berjaya against the PBS in that the party is anti-Islam and that Muslims are being threatened in Sabah are baseless, untrue and malicious fabrications."

"I presented to him the real facts pertaining to scholarship awards and filling of positions and the matter of transfers in the civil service."

For example, he said there had been allegations that the PBS Government had only award-

ed scholarships to three Muslims last year while 80 scholarships were actually awarded them.

On the issue of crosses being painted on the State mosque in Kota Kinabalu, Dr Mahathir had said he did not believe the PBS was responsible, Datuk Pairin said.

He added that Dr Mahathir had also urged PBS and its supporters to remain calm and cooperate with the authorities to overcome the situation.

With regard to the Prime Minister's visit to Sabah, Datuk Pairin said although the matter was discussed, the date was not fixed.

"I welcome the confirmation (of the visit) with relief as we can now prepare for the visit properly. He has also agreed to open the new Kota Kinabalu airport terminal."

On whether the question of PBS's application to join the Barisan Nasional was discussed, he replied in the affirmative, adding that the Prime Minister gave an assurance that the matter was being considered.

Datuk Pairin felt that membership in the Barisan Nasional could stabi-

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lise the situation in the State.

Asked what could be done to avoid the imposition of emergency rule in Sabah, he said the people should not retaliate.

He commended the police for "handling the situation rather well" despite allegations that they had been slow in their actions.

Datuk Pairin said the PBS Government was carrying out "necessary communication" with various leaders of other political parties with a view to "get them to come down to earth and be rational about the whole

thing".

Referring to reports that illegal immigrants might have been involved in the recent demonstrations, he said the police were expected to take necessary action.

So far, eight people have been detained in connection with the bomb blasts and the first person detained was a foreigner.

Datuk Pairin, in appealing to those responsible for "the trials and tribulations which have befallen us in Sabah", hoped that commonsense would prevail and that peace could be maintained.