

Sabah polls will be held — PM

■ USNO AND BERJAYA
CONFIDENT AGREEMENT
WILL BE SIGNED TODAY: P2

KOTA BARU, Fri. — Elections will be held in Sabah soon and a coalition Government will be formed regardless of which party wins the most number of seats.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who said this today, added: "The elections cannot be avoided as the State Assembly has already been dissolved. The Yang di-Per-tua Negeri cannot withdraw the dissolution of the Assembly."

The Sabah State Assembly was dissolved on Feb. 26 — about 10 months after the Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) came to power by winning 25 of the 48 seats contested.

Speaking to reporters after a meeting with Kelantan Umno divisional heads, the Prime Minister said the PBS, Berjaya and Usno have agreed to form the coalition Government proposed under the formula to ease the political tension and unrest in the State.

Asked if the coalition Government

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would still be formed if PBS won by a landslide margin, Dr Mahathir said: "The coalition would still have to be formed under the agreement."

He said he expected the agreement to be formally signed tomorrow when Chief Minister Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan comes to Kuala Lumpur.

Main concern

"If nothing happens, and Datuk Pairin can come, the agreement will be signed tomorrow. If not, at the soonest time possible," he said.

Datuk Pairin had not been able to meet him and the other Sabah party leaders in Kuala Lumpur because of illness. Dr Mahathir said he did not meet Deputy Chief Minister Mark Koding, who had been sent in Datuk Pairin's place, due to time constraints.

On the hitches that had held up the

signing of the agreement, Dr Mahathir said: "Generally, there is agreement. We hope and pray that the coalition will work."

To speculation that Berjaya was holding up the signing of the agreement because it wanted the formula to be accepted on all fronts, the Prime Minister said the Barisan Nasional component party will go along with the proposal.

"Usno is generally agreeable to the formula," he said.

Dr Mahathir said his main concern was that the recent unrest in Sabah, manifested by demonstrations, be ended.

"All we want to do is stop all the demonstrations, the nonsense. But it has not been stopped. We can't be sure unless the people co-operate. On the whole, the people are reasonable," he added.

The Prime Minister said the PBS Government had been "unacceptable" by the Barisan because it "represented only one or two communities".

"We cannot accept this. They (PBS) tried to bring in more communities to make it a multi-racial party but in doing so they created a lot of tension."

It was clear, therefore, that the PBS approach towards creating a multi-racial administration in Sabah had not been the right one.

The PBS, which had rejected the suggestion for a coalition Government earlier in its rule before the political situation took a turn for the worse, had now agreed to it because they had realised their approach was unsuccessful.

"The next approach is therefore the coalition," said Dr Mahathir.