

PM: POLLS THE ONLY WAY

By KALIMULLAH HASSAN
and I. RAJESWARY

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the only solution now to the Sabah crisis was to hold elections.

"We have tried to promote the Barisan Nasional concept of power sharing but it is not acceptable — at least to the PBS," he told reporters after chairing a three-hour Barisan Supreme Council meeting this evening.

Asked if there was any other solution to the State's political crisis following the failure of the *Sabah Formula*, Dr Mahathir said: "The solution is elections. We leave it to them."

Dr Mahathir stressed that the Sabah cri-

sis was not a Muslim-Christian fight.

"It's political. It's just who forms the Government (that is being disputed by the Sabah parties)," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Barisan would not interfere in the Sabah elections scheduled for May 5 and 6 and added that the Federal Government would ensure that the elections were conducted fairly and justly.

"We will ensure that security is not threatened," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Barisan still felt that Sabah should have a coalition government.

"The Barisan accepts the coalition concept and formula originally proposed by the Parti Bersatu Sabah and agreed to by Usno and Berjaya.

"We discussed the *Sabah Formula* and agreed that we cannot set aside the Barisan philosophy of sharing power between different races. This is the only way to ensure stability in the country," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he met PBS president

and Chief Minister Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan and Deputy Chief Minister Mark Koding again today to discuss a solution to the crisis.

However, he said no agreement could be reached and Datuk Pairin informed him that the PBS would not join the Barisan and instead contest all 48 seats.

The formula had proposed that the PBS contest 28 seats, Usno 16 and Berjaya four. After the elections, both the PBS and Usno would be accepted into the Barisan, he said.

Dr Mahathir said that since the PBS had withdrawn its application to join the coalition "we had no choice but to accept it. Maybe in the future . . . I don't know."

He added that the Barisan also decided to defer a decision on the application by five other Sabah parties — Usno, Pasok, Parti Cina Sabah, Parti Murut and Sabah Chinese Consolidated Party — to join the coalition.

"We deliberated carefully their applications and we feel at this time — though we

have nothing against them — we cannot accept anyone," he said.

Asked about the Barisan's chances in the coming election, Dr Mahathir said: "We can do very well."

Dr Mahathir said that since Berjaya was the sole Barisan representative in Sabah, the coalition would back it in the elections "for the moment."

"At the moment, we have not considered (the applications from) the other five. Tomorrow, the day after . . . I don't know."

On the PBS claims that the *Sabah Formula* made it out as a communal party and that it decided to contest all seats to prove that it was a multi-racial party, Dr Mahathir said: "It is their opinion."

Asked if there would be any further negotiations, Dr Mahathir said "we have not decided."

On whether the PBS application would be considered if it proved its point in the elections, Dr Mahathir said: "I wouldn't pre-empt that."

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