

BN: IT'S UP TO THE MPs

Dr M: We can only expel parties

By Zainal Epi and Man Yuke Fong

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — The Barisan Nasional cannot determine the position of MPs and State Assemblymen from the old Umno who refuse to join Umno Baru, coalition chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister and Umno Baru president said the Barisan was a coalition of parties and, therefore, did not have individuals as members.

"We can only expel parties and not individuals. Also, the coalition is not a political party and cannot determine the position of these MPs and State Assemblymen (who refuse to join Umno Baru) ... We have no power over them.

"At the same time, Umno Baru cannot speak for people who are not our members or who have resigned from the party," Dr Mahathir told reporters after chairing a two-hour meeting of the Barisan supreme council at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

All the leaders of the 13 component parties of the coalition attended the meeting, except Usno president Tun Datu Mustapha Harun.

“The coalition is not a political party and cannot determine the position of these MPs and State Assemblymen ... We have no power over them.”

— Dr Mahathir yesterday

Dr Mahathir said that it was now left to the MPs and Assemblymen concerned to determine their own position.

"It is up to them to decide whether or not to support the Barisan.

"If they consider themselves as not a supporter (of the Barisan), it is up to them to decide what to do," he added.

Dr Mahathir said this was not the first time that the Barisan faced such a situation.

"The precedent was set when the MCA took action against an MP from the party. We did not do anything at Barisan level," he said.

(Former Deputy Youth and Sports Minister Wang Choon Wing was disqualified as an MCA

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member after he was sentenced on May 9 to nine months' jail each on two counts of criminal breach of trust involving \$211,000 belonging to a company.

(The MCA constitution states that anyone convicted and jailed for a minimum of six months or fined more than \$2,000 for any offence involving dishonesty, and fails to receive a pardon, ceases to be a party member.)

On the seating arrange-

ment in the Dewan Rakyat for the MPs involved, Dr Mahathir said: "We do not decide for Parliament. If there are applications (from the MPs concerned), the Speaker will have to decide."

Asked whether Umno Baru would contest in a by-election in Johore Baru now that the MP (Datuk Shahrir Abdul Samad) had said he would vacate the seat, Dr Mahathir replied: "We have to see first whether he will resign."

On reports that allocations had been cut off for MPs and Assemblymen who refused to join Umno Baru, Dr Mahathir said the procedure was for the money to go through the district office concerned.

He said elected representatives had the right to propose projects to be financed from the allocations, but whether these would be accepted was another matter.

Dr Mahathir said the procedure applied to all, including Umno Baru and the Opposition.