

Sabah, Sarawak to retain special terms

KOTA KINABALU, Fri. — The Federal Government does not intend to remove the special conditions for the entry of Sabah and Sarawak into Malaysia 26 years ago so long as the two States feel they still need the safeguards of those conditions, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The conditions were agreed to at that time because the people of Sabah and Sarawak felt they needed such safeguards, he told a news conference before returning to Kuala Lumpur after a five-hour visit to open the Parti Bersatu Sabah congress.

He said: "So long as the people of Sabah and Sarawak are worried about their rights being affected, we do not intend to remove these special conditions.

"When the time comes when there is strong patriotism and there is no

longer any suspicion about people from the peninsula, we may discuss the matter."

Dr Mahathir had been asked whether, after more than a quarter century of independence in Malaysia, these special conditions, regarded by some quarters as obstructing full national integration, will be removed.

The Prime Minister also said it would not be an easy task to bring about complete national solidarity because there were still a lot of differences (between the two regions) and because of the physical distance between the peninsula and Sabah and Sarawak.

Nevertheless, much has been achieved in stages in this direction in many fields, he said, citing that "relations between the State and Federal Governments are good; what needs to be promoted further are people-to-people ties".

On the problem of illegal immigrants, the Prime Minister said the matter was discussed with Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan.

"We will send them back and the task force formed specially for this will study all aspects of the problem," he added.

Election

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's coastline made it difficult for the authorities to guard against illegal entry.

"Kuala Lumpur itself is facing the problem of illegal immigrants, including those from the Philippines," he added.

On the differences in electricity rates between the peninsula and Sabah and Sarawak, the Prime Minister said the Government has directed that the matter be studied and the reasons be determined before any decision is ta-

ken.

Asked about the next general election, Dr Mahathir said although he has yet to decide when it should be held, the Barisan Nasional's election machinery and those of its component parties are 100 per cent ready.

On discrepancies in the electoral rolls in Sabah raised by PBS Youth which has alleged multiple registrations and voters with identical names or identity card numbers, Dr Mahathir said:

"This has happened not only in Sabah. That is why after the registration of new voters, the rolls are displayed for the public to check. If complaints are not received at that time, then the rolls are finalised."

He advised the people to check the rolls when they are on display to ensure that such discrepancies do not occur. — Bernama