

Prime Minister: We may amend Elections Act

Barisan may not support Kim Sai

By NOR HAWA YUNUS
and AZMI M. ANSHAR

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Labour Minister Lee Kim Sai may not have the backing of the Barisan Nasional if he insists on contesting in Seputeh against DAP's Lee Lam Thye without the approval of the BN Supreme Council, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"We appointed him to represent us in Hulu Langat. Therefore, as long as he is in the BN, he must seek the permission of the coalition if he wants to resign."

In the light of the Kim Sai-Lam Thye challenge, the Prime Minister said the Government might consider amending the Elections Act to prevent MPs and State Assemblymen from forcing by-elections by resigning without good reasons.

He said he would bring the matter up with the Cabinet and BN Supreme Council.

Speaking to reporters at Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat's Hari Raya open house, Dr Mahathir said an election was a serious matter and no one should make a joke out of it.

"Elections are held to choose the people's representatives, not to test the personal strength

of an individual."

By-elections, the Prime Minister said, also cost money. He added that the Government did not want to be used as a tool to decide who was strong and who was weak.

"The Government manages public funds. I do not think that the rakyat want certain people to waste public funds to determine who is more popular."

Dr Mahathir said the test of popularity could only be decided during general elections.

This is the first time that the Prime Minister, who is also the BN chairman, has made a

direct reference to the controversial showdown between the two Lees since it surfaced at the start of the Bentong by-election campaign.

Since then, Mr Lee Kim Sai, who won the Hulu Langat seat in the 1986 general election over his DAP rival, had submitted his resignation letter to the MCA to take effect on May 19.

The BN Supreme Council has not been officially informed although MCA president Datuk Seri Ling Liong Sik recently pleaded for BN understanding of the reasons for Mr Lee's acceptance of the challenge.

Datuk Seri Dr Ling had said that the MCA fully supported Mr Lee Kim Sai in the fight.

A by-election in Seputeh would also lead to by-elections in Hulu Langat and Bukit Bintang, the parliamentary seat of Mr Lee Lam Thye.

Dr Mahathir said the BN Supreme Council would meet in June to decide whether Mr Lee Kim Sai could quit his Hulu Langat seat.

"As long as the Supreme Council has not made its decision, he cannot quit. If he insists on doing so, he may not get the support of the Barisan in the Seputeh by-election."

The Prime Minister said he would propose that those resigning their seats without valid reasons be barred from contesting. Action may also be taken against them.

Later tonight, Datuk Seri Dr Ling said he would discuss with Dr Mahathir the question of Mr Lee Kim Sai contesting in Seputeh against Mr Lee Lam Thye.

"I am confident of resolving the matter in the next few days," he said at the first anniversary dinner of the Lucky Garden MCA branch here today.

Asked if this meant, he would call for an emergency meeting of the BN Supreme Council, Datuk Seri Dr Ling said: "The matter will be resolved in the next few days. That is all I have to say."

Datuk Seri Dr Ling said the MCA's campaign promised that newly-elected Bentong MP Datuk Lim Ah Lek would be made a Minister would be fulfilled.