

BN may not support Kim Sai: PM

15 MAY 1989

(P)

LABOUR Minister Lee Kim Sai may not get the backing of the Barisan Nasional (BN) should he insist on contesting in Seputeh against the DAP's Lee Lam Thye without the approval of the BN Supreme Council, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

"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 to resign," the Prime Minister added.

In the light of the Kim Sai-Lam Thye challenge, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the Government may consider amending the Elections Act to prevent MPs and State Assemblymen from forcing by-elections by resigning without good reasons. He said he will personally 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 in Kuala Lumpur, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said an election is a serious matter and no one should make a joke of it. "Elections are held to choose the peoples' representatives not to test the personal strength of an individual," he added.

By-elections, said the Prime Minister, also cost money, adding that the Government does not want to be used as a tool to decide who is strong and who is 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," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said, adding that popularity should only be decided during general elections.

This is the first time the Prime Minister, who is also the BN chairman, made a direct reference to the controversial showdown between the two Lees since it surfaced at the start of the Bentong by-election campaign.

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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 Ling

had said that the MCA fully supported Mr Lee Kim Sai in the fight.

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

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the BN Supreme Council will meet in June to decide whether Mr Lee Kim Sai can 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 Nasional in the Seputeh by-election," he added.

The Prime Minister said he is puzzled by the DAP wanting to test its strength in a Chinese-majority area while claiming to be a multi-racial party.

"It appears as though they are only interested in the Chinese votes and are ignoring the non-

Chinese votes ... It is as though they do not put any value on Malay or Indian votes," he said.

He described the DAP's stance as unhealthy and said it will thwart the Government's effort to curb racial sentiments in the country.

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