

Federal Government will not interfere in sacking of Koding

PM: It is a Sabah State matter

By Nor Hawa Yunus

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — The Federal Government will not interfere in the sacking of Datuk Mark Koding as Sabah Deputy Chief Minister and Minister of Industrial Development yesterday, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said it was a State matter and he was waiting for a report from Chief Minister Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan.

"For as so long as it is within the law and the rights of the ruling Parti Bersatu Sabah to act. We cannot interfere," he said in response to questions from newsmen about the latest development in Sabah after launching the 55th anniversary celebrations of the civil service at the National Archives.

The Prime Minister said he had heard about the differences between Datuk Seri Pairin and Datuk Koding but he did not expect them to result in the sacking.

He said Datuk Koding had told him of the possibility of him (Datuk Koding) being sacked from the State Cabinet some time ago.

Asked whether the sacking would lead to a political crisis in Sabah, Dr

Mahathir fell it would not.

He hoped the latest political development would not lead to by-elections in the State.

Datuk Seri Pairin said yesterday he was forced to take "this painful action in the light of clear evidence that Datuk Koding and a few others are engaged in political activities which indicate that they no longer support the PBS".

The PBS supreme council which met last night suspended Datuk Koding (party vice-president), Federal Deputy Labour Minister Kalakau Untol (supreme council member) and eight others for being "in the process of forming a new political party".

□ IT'S A CONSPIRACY, SAYS MARK KODING: P3

tical party" Angkatan Kemajuan Rakyat Sabah (AKAR).

The others suspended are Senator Pandikar Amin Haji Mulia, political secretaries George Mikil, David Ub-ing Pengiran, Robert Meisin Sendalun, Balanting Erom, Jackson Mintu, Saibon Papalan and ordinary member Tara Singh.

Datuk Koding (Ranau Assemblyman) and Kalakau Untol (MP for Tuaran) had challenged the party to expel them.

Under Article 18 of the State Constitution, every Assemblyman "shall vacate his seat if he resigns or is expelled from or for any reason whatsoever ceases to be a member of the political party for which he belonged when he was elected or nominated to the Legislative Assembly."

In his two-page statement announcing the sacking of his deputy, the Sabah Chief Minister said Datuk Koding had indicated twice before

that he was prepared to step down.

"Therefore, recommending the revocation of his appointment I feel that I am at last accepting his offer to step down," he said.

At his Press conference after the PBS supreme council meeting, Datuk Seri Pairin said all the suspended leaders would be referred to the party disciplinary committee and a full investigation will be carried out. They would have to explain their involvement in the new party.

"They will be given a fair hearing. Whatever the action taken against them, the suspended leaders may appeal in accordance with the party's constitution," he said.

Datuk Seri Pairin said PBS would inform Dr Mahathir of the party's stand on Encik Kalakau's position as Federal Deputy Labour Minister.

The Chief Minister has assumed the Industrial Development portfolio following Datuk Koding's dismissal.

Meanwhile, Senator Pandikar Amin announced today his resignation from the PBS, saying that the charges and suspension imposed on him "were a mere formality to oust him from the party".

In a statement issued in Kota Kinabalu, he said the suspension was expected and that the show-cause letter to be sent to him by the party's disciplinary committee was a formality under the party constitution.

"Even if I were to give a justifiable explanation to the charges levelled against me, I am of the opinion that the committee would find me guilty," he said.

Senator Pandikar Amin said rather than give the committee "the pleasure of sacking him undemocratically", he might as well resign on his own accord.