

PBS AND USNO MAY HAVE TO FIGHT IT OUT

S SEP 1986

By Wong Chun Wai

PETALING JAYA, Fri. — Parti Bersatu Sabah and Usno may be allowed to contest under their own symbols if their squabble over the allocation of parliamentary seats is not resolved.

Prime Minister and Barisan Nasional chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad indicated this today, saying that the allocation of seats between the two parties was not an easy task because both had differing views on several matters.

"But we will find a way to resolve their differences either by allocating seats or, if necessary, by allowing them to contest against each other," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he had discussed the position of the Barisan in Sabah with PBS president Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan, who was in his delegation to South Korea.

The Prime Minister was speaking to newsmen at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport on his return from Seoul after a four-day official visit.

Dr Mahathir said his discussions with Datuk Pairin centred on the allocation of seats.

"We did not discuss other matters as the allocation of seats is the most important," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that if the two parties could not reach a consensus, they would not be allowed to contest under the Barisan banner.

"If they insist on challenging each other in the elections, then it would be difficult for them to use the Barisan symbol," he added.

Last month, PBS vice-president Datuk Wong Pin Chung had said the PBS and Usno might face each other in all the 20 parliamentary seats in Sabah during the election.

He had said that the party which won 10 seats in the 1986 general election might contest all the seats since Usno, which had only six, had made a stand that it would field candidates in all seats.

Datuk Wong also said that Datuk Pairin, who is the Sabah Barisan chief, was trying to resolve the issue within the coalition but it appeared unlikely that Usno would back down.

In the 1986 election, the PBS and Usno contested on the Barisan ticket.

Dr Mahathir said today that Datuk Pairin had

asked that the PBS be given more seats as the party had performed well during the state elections in July.

However, he said, Usno was also asking for more seats by making the same claim.

In the state elections, PBS won 36 of the total 48 seats while Usno took the remaining 12.

Asked whether the status quo over the allocation of seats for the two parties would remain, Dr Mahathir said: "For me, they are both in the Barisan... it would not make a difference which of the parties won."

Dr Mahathir said he was making arrangements to visit Sabah soon as part of his nationwide tour with other Barisan leaders.

Asked about the proposed invitation to the Commonwealth secretariat to send an observer team during the elections, Dr Mahathir said the Government was still keen.

He said he had written to Commonwealth Secretary-General Chief Emeka Anyaoku informing him that the Government was still interested in inviting an observer team.

Dr Mahathir said he had

received a letter from Semangat 46 secretary-general Datuk Suhaimi Kamaruddin, who represented the opposition parties, on his return from Venezuela last month.

Datuk Suhaimi, he said, had proposed the setting up of a body which had the responsibilities and powers similar to a commission of inquiry.

"The Government does not agree... the Government only agrees that the observer team come to see how the general election is conducted in accordance with the laws of the country, that's all," he said.

The Prime Minister said the Government had replied to the opposition asking whether it agreed to this but there was no reply.

Asked whether he had found the "inspiration" to call for a general election now that he had completed his visit to Seoul, Dr Mahathir replied in jest: "What election? The election in Korea?"

Replying to another question, he said no date had been set for a Barisan supreme council meeting to discuss the general election.

On the agreement of the warring Cambodian factions in setting up a joint supreme national council, Dr Mahathir expressed hope that the 11-year-old war would come to an end.

He hoped the council would meet soon to expedite efforts to find peace in Cambodia.

"We hope that they can also decide who should represent the country at the United Nations," he added.

Dr Mahathir said Ma-

laysia was also prepared to be part of the UN peace-keeping force to be set up to supervise an end to the war.

On his visit to Seoul, he said he was satisfied with the outcome.

He said South Korea had asked to buy more crude oil from Malaysia as it was affected by the Gulf crisis.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had agreed but said the amount had not been worked out as Malaysia was already producing at capacity to meet the demands of other buyers.