

Pairin pulls PBS out

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — The Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) tonight pulled out of the Barisan Nasional, a move Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad described as a stab in the back.

The decision by the Kadazan-based party was announced by its president and Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan during a political

gathering at the community centre in Kota Kinabalu.

"The development is not going to affect the Barisan Nasional's chances of retaining its two-thirds majority in Parliament," the Prime Minister told newsmen at Angkasapuri after the close of the RTM's telethon week.

Without being specific, Datuk Seri Pairin told the

gathering in Kota Kinabalu that the Federal Government had refused to entertain "our requests".

Commenting on the withdrawal, the Prime Minister said that during his Sunday visit to Kota Kinabalu the Chief Minister made a number of requests that he could not respond to immediately because the current Government was only a care-

taker one.

Instead, he told Datuk Seri Pairin that all requests could only be considered after the general election.

The Prime Minister said during the visit, Datuk Seri Pairin was "extremely nice and had pledged to work with Usno during the election".

He had asked for an increase in petroleum

of Barisan Nasional

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royalty, a special TV station for Sabah and the setting up of a university in the State, which the Prime Minister said could be considered after the general election.

The PBS leader assured the Prime Minister that his party had not fielded Independents against Barisan Nasional candidates, even in Labuan.

"But we know that the In-

dependents are fielded by the PBS," Dr Mahathir said.

Asked by reporters if he would persuade the PBS to change its mind, Dr Mahathir said: "We have been stabbed in the back ... how can we pull out the knife and be friends again. We will not do that."

The Prime Minister said if he could make an appeal, he would like the people of

Sabah to think deeply and not to give their votes to the PBS candidates because the party's action could create unhealthy relations between the State and the Federal Government.

He said it would be difficult to consider talking with the PBS under the present leadership after what it had done.

The Prime Minister said "we have from the begin-

ning doubted the loyalty of the PBS to the BN and the Federal Government, but we had expected them to make their move only after the election".

He said it was already expected that the PBS would leave the BN if the coalition did badly in the polls — by joining forces

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PBS to work with Semangat

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with Semangat 46.

Despite this development, and even if the PBS won all 20 seats in the State, the Barisan would still be able to win its two-thirds majority in Parliament, he said.

He said: "This development, while not expected to demoralise our election workers, will spur them to work even harder to achieve the Barisan victory as they know they have been stabbed in the back.

"I do not believe the PBS move will influence affairs in Sarawak and I also do not believe there will be political instability as a result of this development."

In announcing the withdrawal, Datuk Seri Pairin said the PBS would co-operate with Semangat 46 in the general election.

He said the decision to leave the BN was taken after a lot of thinking, taking into account the various issues concerning the State rights and interests brought to the attention of the Federal Government.

"We were never given fair treatment by the central leadership. They never seem to take heed of our requests," he said.

He said some of the issues were listed in the PBS manifesto in the July State election.

"The PBS was voted into power with a convincing majority, meaning to say the people agreed with what the party is fighting for as contained in the manifesto," he said.

"But when we brought up the matter to the central Government, it never considered our requests. We thought, as a BN component member, they should have at least given some consideration to our requests."

Datuk Seri Pairin said he even brought the matter to the attention of the Prime Minister during his visit to Sabah last Sunday.

The PBS was accepted into the BN together with Usno after the 1985 state election. Almost all the PBS supreme council members were present at the gathering to introduce PBS candidates for the Gaya and Tanjong Aru parliamentary constituencies.

The Chief Minister said the Semangat 46 manifesto was quite similar to the PBS' "so we think its better for us to co-operate with them".

He said the PBS would now support Independents contesting against the six Usno candidates.

The PBS took over the helm of the State Government in 1985, defeating Berjaya with a simple majority.