

DR M: PBS NEVER HAD THE BARISAN SPIRIT



By Harpajan Singh and Barani Krishnan

KUANTAN, Wed. — The Barisan Nasional is better off without the PBS which has always been "a thorn in the flesh" for the coalition, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said here today.

The Prime Minister and Barisan chairman said although the PBS was in the Barisan, its president Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan lacked the Barisan spirit.

The PBS had never considered itself as part of Malaysia and this was evident even in its state song, *Sabahans will show the way*, he added.

"Datuk Seri Pairin never cared for the Federal Government. All the PBS ever strived for was Sabah, Sabah, Sabah. They never had any regards for the other states," Dr Mahathir said. "Therefore, at times we feel difficult to be together with them because they do not seem to consider themselves as Malaysians at all but merely Sabahans. They made all sorts of demand that were difficult to entertain. We feel relieved

that they have left the Barisan now as we had difficulties accommodating the trouble-making PBS all this while."

Dr Mahathir told newsmen after meeting the state Barisan candidates and government servants at separate functions here, that he had met Usno president Tun Datu Mustapha Harun who had presented him with a detailed report on the situation in Sabah.

He said the Barisan would back any independent candidate or party, except the DAP, contesting against PBS in the general election.

The Barisan, he said, was ready to support independents and parties, including Akar, which were challenging PBS "as our main priority now is to defeat PBS."

Dr Mahathir said the PBS pullout from the Barisan would not affect the Barisan's position to win two-thirds majority "as we still have 166 parliamentary seats to go for besides the 14 in Sabah."

"All we need is 120

seats to have a strong government and from my assessment after one week of campaigning, this election is going to see a Barisan victory," he said.

Dr Mahathir said although Semangat 46 president Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah was already declaring that the opposition had won 91 seats, the Barisan, in reality, was a lot stronger and in a position to win a thumping victory.

On Umno's expansion in Sabah, Dr Mahathir said there had been several requests from Malays in the state on this for some time but Umno had rejected the idea all this while.

"We admit that in the present situation, we have

to make a speedy decision and cannot afford to have assessments or studies carried out first since polling is only a few days to go," he added.

On Tengku Razaleigh's statement that the Sabah problem could have been settled if the Federal Government had returned Labuan to Sabah, Dr Mahathir said Tengku Razaleigh was promising to do that if he won, just to get the PBS support.

Dr Mahathir said he was made to understand that PAS president Ustaz Fadzil Noor and his deputy Haji Abdul Hadi Awang were accompanying Tengku Razaleigh to Sabah to campaign for support.

"I wish them all good luck. Tengku Razaleigh is already saying that through PBS, he has won 20 seats in Sabah. I do not know how he mathematically arrived at this when the PBS is only contesting 14 seats," he added.

Later, launching a new bus station, Dr Mahathir said the Barisan was still strong and capable of forming the next government "but we want a stable administration with two-thirds majority."

On the opposition proposals to abolish road tax and toll collections, Dr Mahathir said the Government would stand to lose almost \$3 billion in revenue.