

Umno decides to move into Sabah

By K. H. Lim

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Umno will set up branches in Sabah following PBS' decision to pull out of the Barisan Nasional, its president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

Umno deputy president Encik Ghafar Baba will leave for Kota Kinabalu tomorrow to organise the party's set-up in the State.

The decision was made after a two-hour informal meeting of Umno Supreme Council members at Seri Perdana here tonight.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Dr Mahathir said he had earlier

today informed Usno president Tun Datu Haji Mustapha Datu Harun of the intention and the Usno chief had agreed to the move.

Dr Mahathir said the decision would not mean that Usno would be dissolved.

He said many people in Sabah had in the past asked Umno to set up branches in the State but the party had decided against it.

He had in the past advised such people not to set up Umno branches in the State but now, he found that there were people who did not want to join either Usno or the PBS and they still wanted to join Umno.

Dr Mahathir said Umno would support Usno candidates and independents standing against PBS candidates.

He said the meeting tonight studied the speech of PBS president Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan last night when he announced the withdrawal.

Dr Mahathir said: "It is clear that he made the decision in the belief that Malays in the peninsula are divided 50:50 between Umno and Semangat 46.

"He believed that Semangat 46 is led by people who can be trusted and that Semangat 46 had 900,000 members while Umno had

slightly over a million members.

"To him, it seems that the Malays are divided into two and they feel that any side which receives their support can win."

Dr Mahathir said the PBS chose to align itself with Semangat 46 because they had similar manifestos.

The PBS felt that it could determine which side would form the Government, Dr Mahathir said, adding that this was similar to Semangat 46 president Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah's claim in the newspapers that Sabah and Sarawak were the

"kingmakers".

"PBS feels that Sarawak parties will support them in their role as kingmakers."

He said it was now clear that this did not happen and that the PBDS remained in the BN. Therefore, only the PBS left the BN.

On the large number of independent candidates, Dr Mahathir said it was clear that independents standing against Usno candidates had come from the PBS.

However, he said he did not know the independents who were standing against

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Dr M: It was last minute decision

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the PBS in the 14 seats originally allocated to it when it was within the BN.

The Prime Minister said that it was now clear that the PBS had already planned to take all 20 seats in the State.

He said the decision to leave the BN was made by Datuk Seri Pairin at the last minute as his members and the party supreme council did not know about it.

Asked whether the entry of Umno into Sabah would raise more anti-Federal sentiments, he said the party would make efforts to overcome such feelings.

He alleged that it was Datuk Jeffrey Kitingan who had been inciting such anti-Federal feelings by claiming to be a martyr in that he was being prosecuted over his income tax.

Dr Mahathir, who is also the Home Minister, dismissed fears over security in Sabah or that the election there might be affected.