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Mahathir-Usukan

LABUAN, April 20 (Bernama) <sup>91</sup> Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the decision by the Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) to vie for the Usukan state seat was part of the democratic process.

Point out that the PBS's decision was also a reflection of the Federal Government's stand, he said: +We don't like to restrict people. It is a free country+.

+If they want to leave BN they can. If they want to join BN, they also can,+ said the Prime Minister here during a one-day visit to the island.

The Barisan Nasional will be vying for the Usukan seat through Sabah Umno. The seat was vacated by Usno President Tun Datu Mustapha Datu Harun who has since joined Umno. The ruling PBS announced recently that it would also be contesting the seat. Nomination is fixed for April 29.

On the dissatisfaction expressed by Sabah leaders over a recent statement by Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik that there was a +shocking gap+ among Sabahans on the functions of Federal Ministries, he said anyone was free to comment as this was a free country. -- more/ag.

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Mahathir-Usukan 2 Labuan

Referring to the PBS leadership's remarks on the statement, he said: +They can make their comment. They have been saying a lot of things about the Federal Government and we regard it as their right to speak. We, too, have our right.+

On the recent move by former Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Harris Salleh in joining Umno, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said Datuk Harris is very knowledgeable about developments in Labuan and in a position to advise the Federal Government and the local authority on future projects.

He expressed hopes that Datuk Harris would continue to give whatever assistance and co-operation possible on the island's development.

The Prime Minister added that during his short tour of the island, he took stock of the existing infrastructure, beautification programmes and avenues for potential development.

+I want to know how Labuan can be developed further. The infrastructure is in place, but a lot more work has to be done in other areas+, he said.

The Prime Minister also chaired a closed-door meeting with Labuan Umno leaders. Those present at the meeting included Labuan Umno division head, Senator Isli Siput, Member of Parliament for Labuan Enik Abdul Mulok Awang Damit and Datuk Harris Salleh. -- Bernama/ag.

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