

Adopt M'sian outlook, PM tells Sabah

By P.K. KATHARASON

TAWAU: Sabah's relations with the Federal Government will improve if state leaders adopted a Malaysian outlook rather than a narrow one, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said here yesterday.

The Prime Minister, when asked if the state's relations with the Federal Government would improve if someone other than Chief Minister Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan headed PBS, said: "It is possible."

"But that somebody else who replaces Pairin must have a Malaysian outlook and not the kind of narrow outlook that is presently propagated by Pairin."

Asked if he had any particular person in mind, he said: "That is up to the people of Sabah."

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters at the Tawau airport before leaving for Kuala Lumpur.

He attended a Barisan Nasional Youth rally organised by Sabah Umno Youth on Wednesday to celebrate Malaysia Day.

Dr Mahathir said the large crowd at the rally showed the people's enthusiasm and support for the Barisan Nasional though the state had been spreading anti-peninsula and anti-Sarawak sentiments.

On whether anti-federal sentiments were an attempt to take Sabah out of Malaysia, he said the sentiments were aimed at isolating the people of Sabah from other states as "they want to be kings in a small pond."

Dr Mahathir also said the recent re-introduction

of passport ruling for Sarawakians and Malaysians from the peninsula could not be for security reasons.

Security was the responsibility of the Federal Government and not the state since Sabah did not have its own police force or army, he said.

"So it looks like they just want to fuel the sentiments of Sabah for Sabahans only," he added when asked to comment on the passport ruling which the state said was being re-introduced because of security reasons.

It was reported recently in a local newspaper that a new party to be known as Party Kemajuan Rakyat was soon to be launched in Sabah. The party reportedly comprised PBS and Akar leaders and its pro-tem committee hoped to be aligned to Barisan.

Dr Mahathir told reporters on arrival in Kuala Lumpur that Pairin's suggestion that Malaysia be divided into east and west would create a situation similar to the time when Bangladesh was East Pakistan.

Pairin had suggested that Sabah and Sarawak be referred to as East Malaysia and Peninsular Malaysia as West Malaysia.

"He (Pairin) wants a Bangladesh created as he (Pairin) knows Bangladesh's history," Dr Mahathir was quoted by Bernama as saying.

Prior to 1971, Bangladesh was part of Pakistan known as East Pakistan which later claimed independence from the Pakistani Government.

A subsequent nine-month war of independence resulted in the

birth of Bangladesh.

Dr Mahathir, who is Barisan chairman, said his Tawau trip showed that Sabah people now strongly backed the coalition.

As other fellow Malaysians, Sabahans too aspired for a peaceful and progressive life, he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said the party was well-received by Sabah people and so far some 250,000 are Umno members.

He was confident that Umno would continue flourishing if there were no disruptions and instigations against it by certain parties.

On PBS claims that Umno recruited illegal immigrants as members by giving them Malaysian identity cards, Dr Mahathir said Umno suspected that it was the PBS which was doing such thing for their own ends.

Tamparuli state assemblyman and PBS youth chief Datuk Wilfred Bumburing had alleged that certain parties were helping illegal immigrants get Malaysian identity cards to register as voters and join Umno.

Dr Mahathir also said his five-day official visit to Ireland from Sept 22 marks the establishment of government-to-government links with that country.

The move was because of the increasing number of Malaysian students in Ireland.

Dr Mahathir's visit, the first by a Malaysian head of government, is at the invitation of his Irish counterpart Albert Reynolds.