

# PM to Usno: Don't link up with PBS

KUALA LUMPUR: Usno will be expelled from the Barisan Nasional if it co-operates with Parti Bersatu Sabah to form a coalition state government, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said some Usno Assemblymen had, on several occasions, expressed their unhappiness over not being able to join Umno.

"We had explained to them that if they joined Umno, under the state's laws, they would cease to be assemblymen. We will then be forced to hold by-elections," he said after chairing an Umno supreme council meeting.

"It is not that we do not want them to join Umno but the Sabah laws do not allow them to," said Dr Mahathir, who is Barisan chairman.

It has been reported that PBS and Usno leaders have been meeting on the possibility of forming a coalition state government, and the leaders of the two parties were in the final stages of their discussions.

Usno has 11 assemblymen in the 54-member Sabah State Assembly. PBS has 42 including six nominated members while Umno has one.

Former Usno president Tun Datu

Haji Mustapha bin Datu Harun is the only Umno assemblyman. He ceased to be the Usukan assemblyman after joining Umno but was re-elected on an Umno ticket in a by-election.

Dr Mahathir said the news report was discussed at the Umno supreme council meeting but no decision was taken as the report could not be confirmed.

Asked whether there were complaints that state Umno division heads were more powerful than Usno assemblymen, he said such a situation was not possible.

"Umno division chairmen are not more powerful... more influential perhaps," he added.

Reports of a possible PBS-Usno coalition government surfaced last year but Usno acting president Datu Amir Kahar Tun Mustapha had continuously refuted the reports.

Umno secretary-general Datuk Mohamed Rahmat said if the report was true, Usno would have to bear the consequences as indicated by Dr Mahathir.

He said it was obvious that the PBS was not prepared to face a snap state election and had resorted to buy over elected representatives instead.