

PM: PBS must give some guarantees

PETALING JAYA: Barisan Nasional will only accept Parti Bersatu Sabah back into its fold if it can guarantee that it fully embraces the coalition's principles.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the coalition welcomed PBS' intention to rejoin Barisan, but the party must fulfil certain requirements.

"This is not the first time they (PBS) have expressed their intention, but we want to know their reasons for wanting to rejoin us," he told reporters on his return from Cyprus at Subang airport yesterday.

He was commenting on a statement by PBS vice-president Datuk Lajim Okin that the party was willing to rejoin Barisan now that Finance Minis-

ter Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was taking over the Umno number two post.

Asked what guarantee PBS must provide, the Prime Minister said: "We don't know yet as we have to discuss first."

He said it would not be easy for PBS to rejoin the coalition because of what happened in the 1990 general election.

In 1990, PBS pulled out from the coalition two days before polling day.

"We do not want a situation where parties can join and pull out from Barisan whenever they feel like it. If this is the situation then the coalition will not have any meaning.

"If any party wants to join the coalition, it must fully adhere to its principles," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said the Barisan wanted to see permanent changes and unflagging loyalty in the party towards the coalition before readmitting it.

"We don't want the party to repeat the 1990 incident in the next general election as this can cause havoc," he added.

Asked about the possibility of improving the relationship between the people in the peninsula and Sabah by readmitting PBS into the coalition, Dr Mahathir replied:

"If you talk about enhancing unity (by readmitting PBS) then the real cause for disunity is PBS.

"Previously, we had very close relations with the Sabah Government. I used to visit the state five times a year and I could see the development and knew all the leaders in the

state.

"However, since PBS took over the state the relations have become very strained as if I am being separated from the people of Sabah."

In Johor Baru, the MIC said it viewed the PBS intention to rejoin the Barisan with apprehension.

President Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said MIC had every reason to be wary of PBS as the party was the worst hit by PBS' last minute decision in the last general election.

"As a small political party, MIC suffered great losses at the polls because of PBS' action. The experience is not something we can forget easily.

"Therefore, we urge other component parties in the Barisan to give serious consideration to this matter," he said.

27 OCT 1993