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Mahathir - Sabah

PAIRIN CASE VERDICT MAY CONTAIN MESSAGE, SAYS PM

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KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 18 (Bernama) -- ⁹⁴ Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the High Court verdict in Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan's graft case might contain a message directed towards the federal government.

The federal government would study the decision to understand what sort of message was intended, said the Prime Minister without elaboration.

He was speaking to reporters after opening the Pemas Sogo department store here.

The High Court in Kota Kinabalu yesterday fined Pairin RM1,800 after finding him guilty of abusing his position to approve a RM1.48 million shophouse project to a company in which his relatives held shares.

Section 2(1) of the Emergency (Essential Powers) Ordinance 1970, under which Pairin was charged, carries a maximum sentence of 14 years jail or a fine of RM20,000 or both.

With the sentence, Pairin is now cleared to continue holding public office and to contest in the snap state elections scheduled for Feb 18 and 19.

A fine of RM2,000 and a jail term of one year would have disqualified him. -- more

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Mahathir - Sabah 2 (last) Kuala Lumpur

Dr Mahathir, who is Barisan Nasional chairman, was confident the court verdict would not affect adversely the BN's chances in the election.

He said the Pairin-led Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) would use the issue of state rights in its campaign but the BN had the means to counter it.

"We will explain that our objective is merely to bring development to Sabah. So far, Sabah has been unable to make progress because of Pairin's style of administration," he said.

In the 1990 state election, PBS won 36 of the 48 seats contested. The rest went to Usno.

PBS subsequently pulled out of the BN on the eve of the parliamentary elections the same year. Usno teamed up with the PBS last year to form a coalition state government but Usno had since been deregistered. -- Bernama

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