

Court decision probably a message,^(p) says Dr M

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Kota Kinabalu High Court decision on Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan was probably a message meant to be conveyed to the Federal Government.

The Prime Minister was asked to comment on the judgment against Pairin who was found guilty of using his position as Chief Minister to commit a corrupt practice by approving to Rimkaya Sdn Bhd a contract for a shophouse project in Tambunan worth RM1,483,341.60.

Dr Mahathir said: "Maybe the court has a message for the Federal Government. We have to study it in order to understand what is the message being conveyed."

Miri-based judge Denis Ong Jiew Fook fined Pairin RM1,800, which is RM200 less than the amount which would have forced him to vacate his post as Chief Minister.

Under the Federal and State Constitutions, those convicted of a criminal offence and fined more than RM2,000 or jailed more than a year are disqualified from being MPs or State Assemblimen.

The maximum sentence for the offence under the Emergency (Essential Powers) Ordinance is 14 years' jail or a RM20,000 fine.

Dr Mahathir had earlier opened the Pernas Sogo complex and the Sogo Pernas Department store in Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman here.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Barisan Nasional chief, was also asked to comment on the likely tactics by the Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) in the campaign in the state elections next month.

Asked whether the BN was ready for whatever tactics the PBS would use in the campaign, Dr Mahathir said: "When we have an election we have to be prepared for everything."

Asked whether the PBS would use the tactic based on the belief that Sabah is for Sabahans, Dr Mahathir said he was confident that Pairin would use that as one of his campaign tactics.

He said: "We will explain (to the people) that we just want to help develop Sabah. All this while Sabah could not develop due to Pairin's administrative ways."

On reports that Yayasan Sabah director Datuk Dr Jeffrey Kitingan had applied to the Home Ministry to return to Kota Kinabalu today, Dr Mahathir said he had not heard about it.

"I have heard only talk about it. He is still under

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Dr Mahathir: Kuala Lumpur Master Plan not being amended

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restricted residence. He still cannot go. But if he wants to go, we need to consider his application."

It was reported that Kitingan, 45, who was released from detention under the Internal Security Act last Dec 22, sent a letter to the Home Ministry yesterday believed to be related to his request to return to Sabah for a short period.

Kitingan, who is Pairin's younger brother, is under restricted residence in Seremban. He was detained under the ISA on May 1991 for alleged involvement in a plot to pull Sabah out of Malaysia.

On the appeal against the deregistration of Usno, Dr Mahathir said it was up to the Registrar of Societies. Usno was deregistered on Aug 7 for breaching the party constitution.

Asked on the meeting he chaired yesterday about the Kuala Lumpur Master Plan, the Prime Minister said the Government was not making any amendments to it.

"What we are trying to

work out, however, is how to limit the number of cars coming into the city. This is because no matter what we do, the number of vehicles coming into Kuala Lumpur centre keeps increasing.

"If we increase the parking space, we will be attracting too many cars. There is just no way we can build sufficient roads or parking space for the cars unless you want to convert Kuala Lumpur into a parking lot and have no buildings at all."

Datuk Bandar Datuk Mazlan Ahmad said yesterday parking on the streets in the city centre would be a thing of the past.

Asked about the ringgit's movements in recent weeks, and whether Bank Negara would do anything about it, Dr Mahathir said: "I don't know really, that is up to Bank Negara."

The ringgit has fallen sharply against the US dollar recently, hitting a two-year low of 2.72 against the dollar compared with the steady level of 2.55 just two weeks ago.