

Allow reps to decide, PM tells PBS

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KUALA LUMPUR: Parti Bersatu Sabah's candidates who won in the Sabah election must be allowed to state which side they are really on, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

"There are a lot of people who say they (PBS elected representatives) do not support him (Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan).

"Bring out the (PBS) members and let them say if they support him or not," Dr Mahathir said at a news conference at the Seri Perdana.

Also present was his deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said Pairin had told the Yang di-Pertua Negri of Sabah Tun Mohamed Said Keruak (to have him sworn in as the chief minister) that he had the majority support of his elected representatives based on the election results.

PBS won the Sabah state elections with 25 of

the 48 state assembly seats, while the rest went to BN.

"So, we want to know ... after all, it is only fair to the people of Sabah to have a chief minister who has the support of the elected members (of his party)," he said.

To a question, Dr Mahathir said BN leaders now in Kota Kinabalu had received "messages" from PBS elected representatives that they wanted to cross over to the BN.

"However, I was told that those who sent the messages were being 'locked-up' and not allowed speak to anyone.

"Maybe this is within the rights of the party.

"However, we really want to know," he said.

In KOTA KINABALU, PBS deputy president Datuk Bernard Dompok denied that the party was preventing its assemblymen from crossing over to join Barisan Nasional.

Asked about Datuk Seri

Dr Mahathir Mohamad's comment that there were PBS candidates who wanted to cross over but were prevented by the party, Dompok said:

"No that's not true. None of the newly-elected PBS assemblymen has ever thought of going over to Barisan," he said, adding that the pledge of allegiance taken by all the 24 assemblymen was proof of this.

Dompok said the assemblymen were not being held against their will.

On the delay of Pairin's swearing in, Dr Mahathir said he had been informed that the Yang di-Pertua Negri was not feeling well.

"Nonetheless, he (the Yang di-Pertua Negri) must decide as quickly as possible on the appointment of a chief minister," he said.

While acknowledging the fact that PBS has the right to form the Government, Dr Mahathir said the Yang di-Pertua Negri

had to determine whether Pairin, as the president, actually enjoyed the confidence of PBS' elected representatives.

Asked if BN would form the Government if invited by the Yang di-Pertua Negri, Dr Mahathir replied:

"No, we cannot do that unless the Yang di-Pertua Negri is certain that BN can enjoy the support and confidence from the majority and this includes PBS' representatives."

Dr Mahathir added that BN would accept PBS representatives who wanted to join the coalition, but it (BN) would not solicit them.

Dr Mahathir also commented on a peculiarity in the Sabah state Constitution which allows the ruling party to appoint six additional assemblymen apart from those who won in the elections.

"This has caused a distortion and defied what we mean by one-man-one-vote system.

"The ruling party will get more seats than what it had been given."

Should BN come into power there, Dr Mahathir said it would have the state constitution amended to ensure it conformed with the practices of democracy.

To another question, Dr

Mahathir said BN would make good its campaign promises to those who had elected them.

On Sabah getting a university, Dr Mahathir said it would not materialise as the people there had rejected BN.

"We have promised a university if we win, but we lost.

"That means the Sabah people have decided not to have a university because if you reject BN, you reject the university.

"They are saying that they do not mind not getting the university as PBS is more important ... it's okay, it's their decision," he said.