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Mahathir-Sabah

BN TO APPROACH YANG DIPERTUA NEGERI TO FORM SABAH GOVT AT RIGHT TIME

KUALA LUMPUR, March 15 (Bernama) -- The Barisan Nasional (BN) will wait for the right time to approach Sabah Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Mohamed Said Keruak to form a new state government in accordance with the constitution, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the BN would have the majority in the state legislative assembly following the crossing over of several Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) assemblymen and the formation by Datuk Dr Jeffrey Kitingan of a new party which wanted to join the BN.

"It would mean we have the majority and we have to have a no-confidence vote against the present government. We hope that the majority of the state assemblymen can decide to form a government," he told newsmen after holding a Hari Raya open house at Sri Perdana for VIP guests.

The first sitting of the Sabah state assembly after last month's state election is slated for Friday.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said the PBS now had less than half the number of seats in the assembly, even with the inclusion of the six appointed assemblymen.

He also said that three-quarters of the PBS assemblymen were expected to switch to the BN.

As at noon today, eight PBS assemblymen, including party secretary-general Datuk Joseph Kurup and Jeffrey, the younger brother of Chief Minister Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan, had announced that they had quit to support the BN. -- more

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Dr Mahathir said the BN would approve the application by the new Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS) to join the coalition. The PBRS was launched today in Kota Kinabalu with Kurup as protem president and Jeffrey as his deputy.

Kurup and Jeffrey are the assemblymen for Sook and Bingkor respectively.

The PBS had captured 25 seats for a narrow win in the state election last month, and later appointed six more assemblymen as provided for under the constitution. The BN had won 23 seats.

"I don't see how the PBS can continue its government because it is clear they they have less than half the number of seats, including the six additional appointments," the prime minister said.

Dr Mahathir said the BN would fulfill its promise to rotate the chief minister's post among the three major groups in the state with each leader serving a two-year term. -- more

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Mahathir-Sabah 3 (last) Kuala Lumpur

On his meeting with Jeffrey Kitingan last night, Dr Mahathir said he did not make any decision then because he was merely informed that there were assemblymen leaving the PBS and a new party was yet to be formed.

"I said I want everyone to form a government that will work for all the people of Sabah and not just a group of Sabahans because, as it is now, it seems only a small group is getting the benefits," said Dr Mahathir.

"I want the new state government that will be formed to really focus on the development of the state and people. The slogan of Sabah for Sabahans must be dropped," he said.

The prime minister also wanted the new government to work closely with the federal government to build up Sabah.

"The state government will be formed as soon as possible. We will wait until the situation is clear. At the moment, it is not clear," he said.

With the defection of Kurup, the BN now has 31 members, including one nominated assemblyman, in the state assembly. The PBS is left with 23, including five nominated members. -- Bernama

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