

PBS can contest seats anywhere, says Dr M

KANGAR, Sun. Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) is free to field its candidates nationwide in the coming general election, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"It is their right. We are democratic. They can field their candidates anywhere they like," he said.

He was commenting on a report of PBS's intention to field its candidates in Sarawak and Peninsular Malaysia in the coming general election if amendments to its constitution were approved by the Registrar of Societies.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir closed the premier challenge trophy 1994 badminton competition organised by the Welfare Organisation of Wives of Perlis Elected Representatives (Baidunita) at Kompleks Warisan here.

On Thursday, Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu vice-president Datuk Abang Johari Abang Openg said PBS should not bring its "disease" to Sarawak by fielding its candidates in the State in the coming election.

Asked whether the latest move by the PBS would be a threat to the Barisan Nasional, Dr Mahathir said it would not.

On whether the PBS would obtain the support of the people if it contested in Sarawak and the peninsular in the coming election, the Prime Minister said it was up to the people whether to support them or not.

Asked about a recent statement by PBS president Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan that the rotation of the Sabah Chief Minister's post among BN component parties was adversely affecting the development of Sabah, Dr Mahathir said:

"When he was the Chief Minister (of Sabah) for nine years, the State's development was adversely affected.

"In fact, the situation in the State got worse. Its economy deteriorated. No changes were made," he said.

Asked about claims that there was a tussle among leaders of BN component parties in Sabah to be the next Chief Minister, Dr Mahathir said previously the post was monopolised by one person to the extent that no one else had the opportunity to hold the post.

On the defection of several founder leaders of Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS), Dr Mahathir said the BN did not want disloyal people.

"What is the point of being party members if self-interest becomes their priority," he added.

On claims by PBRS leaders that they left their party due to unfair representation in the Sabah Government, Dr Mahathir said:

"I do not know. During PBS time, only Pairin became the Chief Minister, now at least others stand a chance."

In September, PBRS deputy president Datuk Clearance Bongkos Malakun and five others joined the PBS.

The five were PBRS vice-president Datuk Conrad Mojuntin, treasurer-general George Yeapp, deputy secretary-general Joannes Golokin, executive secretary Fred Labunda and central committee member Sylvester Sidion.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir attended an hour-long closed door meeting with State Umno leaders at the Public Library.

Asked about the meeting, Dr Mahathir said the meeting discussed the party's preparations for the election.

On whether the State party machinery was ready for the election, he said the Perlis Umno is confident of facing the election any time.