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PBS-Amendment

PBS AGAINST AMENDMENT TO SABAH CONSTITUTION

TAWAU, Feb 26 (Bernama) -- The opposition Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) is strongly against the proposal to amend the Sabah Constitution to curtail the administrative powers of the Chief Minister.

PBS president Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan, who was Chief Minister for nine years until 1994, said the party would take the matter to the International Court of Justice if the state constitution was amended.

He was commenting on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement on Saturday that the state constitution and state laws would be amended to curtail the administrative powers of the Chief Minister of Sabah, who had more clout than Chief Ministers or Menteri Besar of other states.

Pairin told reporters here that the Prime Minister's announcement regarding the proposed amendments showed that the Federal Government was trying to change the state laws.

He also supported the move by Sabah Umno in opposing the two-year rotation system for the post of the state's Chief Minister. "Matters regarding the state's administration, especially the appointment of the Chief Minister, should be decided by the people of Sabah themselves," he said.

Meanwhile, in a statement issued in Kota Kinabalu, PBS deputy president Dr Maximus Ongkili said the proposal, if implemented, was a serious encroachment and interference in the affairs of the state as well as contravening the spirit of the Malaysia Agreement under which Sabah became part of Malaysia.

"Powers of the Chief Minister as enshrined in the state constitution and laws are an integral part of the Malaysia Agreement and, therefore, cannot simply be taken away by any party," he said.

He added: "External actions of such nature will be viewed by the people as plain political encroachment and interference in the affairs of the state and its people. Such actions and subsequent reactions will not promote territorial integration and unity."

Chief Minister Datuk Salleh Said Keruak said yesterday that the proposed amendments concerned the administrative powers of the Chief Minister as well as tightening control against irregularities, and they did not touch on the state's rights. -- BERNAMA