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PBS-Amendments

PBS URGES BN TO WITHDRAW AMENDMENTS

KOTA KINABALU, April 24 (Bernama) -- The opposition Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) today urged the Sabah Barisan Nasional (BN) to withdraw the proposed amendments to five state laws aimed at curtailing the powers of the Chief Minister by transferring them to the state Cabinet.

PBS deputy president Dr Maximus Ongkili said state laws should not be amended merely to solve the state's political problem.

"The state assembly sitting to amend the various state laws should not only be postponed but the Sabah BN should also retract the proposal as well," he said when contacted.

He was asked to comment on the postponement of the sitting to June 17 and 18. The two-day sitting was scheduled to begin tomorrow to debate proposed amendments to the Forest Enactment 1968, Land Ordinance (Chapter 69), Mines Ordinance 1960, Sabah Foundation Enactment 1966 and the Delegation of Powers Enactment 1963.

Chief Minister Datuk Salleh Said Keruak announced the postponement of the sitting after a Cabinet meeting yesterday, saying the decision was to give the BN assemblymen more time to study the amendments.

Most of the BN assemblymen were understood to have objected to the proposed amendments during a BN pre-council meeting last Sunday.

Salleh had also said that although the amendments might be slightly modified, the principle and spirit behind the move would be retained to strengthen the Cabinet system.

Dr Ongkili said PBS had all along opposed any attempt to amend the state laws and the fact that many BN assemblymen in Sabah were against the proposal showed that the party's stand was right.

"The postponement of the sitting is appropriate and should there be any problem arising as a result of the proposed amendments, the BN should go back to the people by dissolving the state assembly to pave the way for an election," he said.

The amendments were suggested by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who said the powers vested in the Sabah Chief Minister were excessive compared to the Chief Ministers or Menteris Besar of other states. -- BERNAMA

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