

PBS assemblyman awaits Umno's word on his fate

By EDDY LOK

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KOTA KINABALU: Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) Assemblyman Ulin Pamiang, who has openly expressed his intention to defect to Umno, will stay put in the party if his application is rejected.

Ulin, who won the remote and interior constituency of Pensiangan for PBS in the ninth Sabah election, said he had applied to join Sabah Umno and is keenly awaiting word on his fate.

His detractors in PBS said he has been offered "millions" of ringgit if he defected but Ulin said this is mere "speculation and bad-mouthing".

"I did ask to be admitted to Umno during a meeting with State Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Lajim Ukin last week," he told the Sun in a telephone interview from his village in Pensiangan yesterday.

He said the meeting with Lajim, who is also State Agriculture and Fisheries Minister and a Sabah Umno leader, took place at a hotel in downtown Kota Kinabalu, together with 155 of his divisional leaders and constituents.

"Datuk Lajim told me he would convey my desire to the party leadership . . . there was no black and white application from me. In the meantime, he told me to wait for the response," he said.

According to him, Lajim also mentioned that Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would be informed of his (Ulin) intention and they would first see what he (Mahathir) has to say.

He said for now he is still with the PBS and will remain where he is if the wishes of his constituents for him to join Umno were not granted.

"If they (Umno leaders) don't accept me, then what to do?" he said, adding that accusations by his critics that he is after money and positions are not true.

Ulin also said he had not

considered other BN components such as Parti Demokratik Sabah (PDS) and Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS), headed by Tan Sri Bernard Dompok and Datuk Joseph Kurup respectively, as his constituents are interested in only Umno.

"My constituents want development. PBS has failed to fulfil the promises it made in its election manifesto such as to unite and bring changes to Pensiangan. My constituents think Umno and BN can deliver," he said.

Ulin, a Muslim, said by joining Umno, the dominant partner in the nine-party State BN, he and his constituents hope they will enjoy progress and live in peace and unity.

On a declaration he made during one of his election campaign stops that his constituents could act against him if he ditched PBS, Ulin clarified that this pledge was good only if PBS had won by a slim margin of 25 seats majority.

"But then, PBS won only 17 seats as against BN's 31," he said.

Ulin, who is the PBS divisional secretary in Pensiangan, also disclosed that he first sought advice from Datuk Dr Jeffrey Kitingan, the brother of PBS President (Datuk Joseph Pairin), on his intention to quit, and was asked to stay on.

"I met Dr Jeffrey on May 30 at the Hongkod Koisaan cultural hall where the Harvest Festival celebration was taking place and he asked me to be patient while he talked to Pairin about it.

"There has been no word from them since," he said. Jeffrey is the PBS assemblyman for the adjoining interior constituency of Bingkor.

The history of PBS, which ruled Sabah for more than nine years, has been marked by defections.

Penampang MP Paul Nontien recently quit PBS and defected to Dompok's PDS.