

25 JUL 2000

Mahathir-BN

BN POSTPONES DECISION ON APPLICATIONS TO JOIN COALITION

KUALA LUMPUR, July 25 (Bernama) -- The Barisan Nasional (BN) Supreme Council today postponed its decision on the application from four political parties to join the coalition of 14 parties.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is also BN chairman, said the component parties postponed their decision on the applications to give them an opportunity to attract as many members to join their respective parties.

"We postponed the decision to allow them to think about it," he told a press conference after chairing the BN general meeting at the Umno headquarters, here today.

The BN component parties are Umno, MCA, MIC, Gerakan and PPP in the peninsula, SAPP, Akar, PBRS, UPKO and LDP in Sabah and PBB, SNAP, PBDS and SUPP in Sarawak.

Meanwhile, BN secretary-general Tan Sri Mohamed Rahmat said the component parties agreed to come up with an appropriate formula to resolve the issue on the application by the four political parties to join the coalition.

"We want to find a formula how we can accept (them) and which will be agreed to by all quarters," he said.

Mohamed said that at the moment, the BN had not rejected the applications by the four parties, whose names were not disclosed.

Besides the annual general meeting (AGM), the BN also held its normal supreme council meeting after the AGM.

Dr Mahathir said he had taken the opportunity to explain at the meeting the current political situation, the effects of the anti-government campaign carried out by the opposition and the Sauk incident which had taken the lives of two security forces' members.

"The anti-government campaign had reached a very dangerous stage as there have been cases of people acting without thinking whether the allegations made against the government were true or otherwise," he said.

The prime minister said the campaign had caused several groups to be willing to take action which brought much destruction to themselves and the nation, merely out of anger and hate against the government.

Dr Mahathir and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had given detailed explanation on the incident in Sauk to avoid misunderstanding that it was caused by acts based on Islam.

"We don't agree with the action, we don't support them and we believe Islam does not ask us to be oppressive of the non-Muslims," he said.

Dr Mahathir said representatives of the component parties also raised several questions on the incident and they were satisfied with the explanation given and promised to give their full cooperation to the government in handling the problem.

The Sauk incident started with the robbery of more than 100 firearms by a group of Al-Ma'unah members at two army camps in Gerik on July 2 and they were later joined by several other members in their hideout in the jungles of Bukit Jenalek, Sauk near Kuala Kangsar.

On July 6, all 27 members of the group surrendered to members of the security forces who had surrounded them in Sauk. However, two of the four taken hostage by the group, Sarjan R. Sagadevan from the Special Branch of the Kuala Kangsar Police and commando Mathew ak Medan from the Terendak Camp, Melaka, were brutally murdered.

Asked whether the Sauk incident had affected relations between the BN component parties, Dr Mahathir said it had not, but, he added, they wanted to know what actually happened so that they could pacify the people.

He said the component parties would also explain to party members as well as the people's representatives on the Sauk incident because misconception on the incident would create confusion and anger among the people.

"For example, there is anger among Sarawakians because a member of the Iban community had been killed by a Muslim.

"We explained that this is not a matter of a Muslim attacking an Iban but rather it was a criminal act by a group which is not supported by the government or other Muslims," he said.

The meeting also decided to hold a BN convention this year and which would be made into an annual affair.

-- BERNAMA

AFY AHH AO