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Mahathir-BN

BN SUPREME COUNCIL TO DISCUSS APPLICATIONS TO JOIN THE COALITION

PUTRAJAYA, July 24 (Bernama) -- The Barisan Nasional (BN) supreme council meeting tomorrow will discuss the applications of several parties to join the coalition, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"There are several parties which are not BN members but support the BN. Now they have asked to become BN members," the prime minister and BN chairman told reporters after a dialogue with about 150 representatives of women's organisations, here.

Asked whether the Indian Progressive Front (IPF) led by former MIC vice-president Datuk M.G. Pandithan was one of them, he said the IPF was one of those interested.

"There's IPF and there're others. But I don't know, I did not see whether the IPF has applied," he said.

The IPF's application to join the 14-member BN had previously been

Asked whether the meeting would discuss the coming Sarawak state election, Dr Mahathir said it was not on the agenda.

On the possibility of a cabinet reshuffle, Dr Mahathir said he did not know about it.

"Didn't hear about it. Sometimes I have to wait for the press to tell me," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the meeting would also discuss the problems faced by the BN components which included support for the party and government and differences in opinion among the component parties which weakened the coalition.

On the dialogue which lasted three hours, he said he heard various views, complaints and proposals related to women in the country.

They included a business fund for women, special treatment for them in the budget and five-year plan, a centre for research on women and their problems, the implementation of syariah laws and injustice to women.

"We have noted all these down and we hope to find ways to resolve them. The government will consider their suggestions and if we feel that they are good, we will implement them" he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that the Women's Day 2000 with the theme "Wanita 2000: Nur - Bermula denganmu" (Women 2000: Nur -- Begins with You) would be celebrated on Aug 25.

Present at the dialogue were his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, and Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Shahrizat Jalil.

-- BERNAMA

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