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Jeffrey, five others join PBRS

Joniston Bangkuai

KOTA KINABALU, Sun. - In a move to reconcile with the Federal Government, Bingkor Assemblyman Datuk Dr Jeffrey Kitingan and five other opposition Parti Bersatu Sabah assemblymen today joined Barisan Nasional through Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah.

The five other assemblymen are Louis Rampas (Kiulu), Edward Linggu Bukut (Tamparuli), Johnny Goh Chin Lok (Inanam), Karim Adam (Kundasang) and Atong Mangabis (Matunggong).

They handed their membership application forms to PBRS president Tan Sri Joseph Kurup at a ceremony to welcome them into the party at Nexus Karambunai Resort, about 30km from here.

It was also attended by PBRS senior officials and about 1,000 supporters of the six assemblymen.

With their crossover to the BN, the PBS, which won 17 seats in the State Election in March last year, is now left with only nine assemblymen. Two of its assemblymen - Abdul Malek Chua (Kuamut) and Ulin Pamiang (Pensiangan) - had in June last year joined the BN through Umno.

The remaining assemblymen in the PBS are its president Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan (Tambunan), Dr Maximus Ongkili (Tandek), Dr Yee Moh Chai (Api-Api), Datuk Michael Asang (Labuk), Radin Malleh (Tenom), Edward Yong (Sembulan), Samson Chin (Sri Tanjung), Datuk Clarence Bongkos Malakun (Moyog) and Herbert Timbun Lagadan (Kedamaian).

The crossover of the six PBS assemblymen to the BN has increased BN's representatives in the State Legislative Assembly to 45, including the six nominated members.

For the PBRS, the crossover brought the number of its assemblymen to seven, including Kurup who is a nominated assemblyman, and making the party second to Umno in terms of the number of assemblymen.

Umno has 29 assemblymen, Sabah Progressive Party (four), United Pasok Momogun Kadazandusun Organisation (three), and Liberal Democratic Party (two).

In his one-hour speech, Dr Jeffrey, a younger brother of Pairin, explained his decision to leave the PBS and rejoin the BN, saying that leaving and joining another party was normal in politics.

"Politics is the art of possibility... enemies can become friends and friends can become enemies," he said, adding that what a leader could achieve for the good of the people was more important.

The former Internal Security Act detainee said reconciliation with BN and the Federal Government was the best solution to the problems faced by the people and the State.

"If we continue to be in confrontation with the Federal Government, it's the people and the State that suffer."

Stressing that time would tell his decision to rejoin the BN was right, Jeffrey said the PBS' portrayal of the party as the champion and protector of the interests and rights of the people of Sabah was nothing but mere political propaganda.

He said the PBS' biggest mistake was to pull out of the BN in 1990, thinking that the people would continue to rally behind it.

"The PBS should learn from its mistakes... we should become friends with the Federal Government in the interests of Sabah and its people because politics is a means to get things done."

Speaking at a news conference later, Jeffrey thanked Prime Minister

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for welcoming their decision to join BN.

Jeffrey believed that more PBS Assemblymen would have joined BN with him if he had a chance to speak to them.

"I did not have the opportunity to explain to them on the need for reconciliation and be part of BN," he said.

On the timing of his crossover to BN today, which coincided with Easter - the day of Jesus Christ's resurrection from death according to Christian teachings, Jeffrey said: "Maybe it was God's plan to resurrect the people's hope for better things to come."

In welcoming the six assemblymen into the BN, Kurup said they were not promised positions and money.

Kurup stressed the crossover had nothing to do with the rotation of the Chief Minister's post.

"The question of who should be Chief Minister is the prerogative of the BN leadership," he said.

However, he added, the entry of the six Assemblymen into the PBRS would enable the party to play a more meaningful role in the development of the State and uniting the people.

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