

Dr M: Pullout may be a ploy by DAP to do well in election

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SIBU, Mon. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said it was possible the DAP decided to leave the opposition coalition as part of its strategy to face the Sarawak election.

"It's possible. We are, after all, dealing with *kaki penipu* (liars)," he said.

Dr Mahathir was meeting the people at Kampung Semop, Pulau Bruit, near here.

On Saturday, the DAP announced its decision to pull out of the four-party coalition, citing its failure to reach an agreement on the Pas concept for an Islamic state as the reason.

The other three members are Parti Keadilan Nasional, Pas and Parti Rakyat Malaysia.

In **Kuala Lumpur**, DAP secretary-general Kerk Kim Hock said today the party's decision was final because they did not believe that the Islamic state controversy would be resolved by other partners.

He stressed that the decision was not "hasty" but one which was discussed and debated in-depth within its central working committee.

He said the DAP could not be

persuaded to rejoin the alliance.

"The DAP has been dealing with the problem for a long time. I doubt that it will be resolved and our decision is final."

Kerk said following their decision, the party had received encouraging feedback from supporters and many of those who left the DAP because of the pact have indicated that they would rejoin the party.

Pas said they were not worried about the pullout as they believed that the party would gain more trust from supporters since they were willing to stand alone rather than compromise efforts to set up an Islamic state.

Parti Keadilan Nasional deputy president Dr Chandra Muzaffar said the party would hold a meeting soon to discuss the effects of the pullout.

Chandra said today they would meet after the Sarawak polls.

Asked if they had already got in touch with their coalition counterparts, Chandra said they kept in touch regularly and they also intended to hold a meeting with them after the election.

In **Seremban**, DAP life adviser Dr

Chen Man Hin said the party was benefiting from its decision as more non-Muslims and Muslims frightened and concerned with Pas' plan to form an Islamic state had begun to shower their support on the DAP.

He added that the pullout showed that the DAP was serious and sincere about helping to achieve justice in the country even though they had to do it alone.

Dr Chen said the DAP was confident that it could return to its traditional ground in the next general election.

But he said that the DAP parted with Pas "as friends."

"We still share the common objective of toppling the BN," he added.

In **Sibu**, DAP national chairman Lim Kit Siang said the party's decision had nothing to do with the Sarawak election or the terrorist attack in the United States.

"The timing was coincidental," said Lim, who was in Sibu for a one-day visit to help the party in the election.

Lim will be a guest speaker at two **ceramah** at the Rejang Park in Sibu.