

Pairin to personally hand over application to PM

By RUBEN SARIO and PHILIP GOLINGAI

KOTA KINABALU: Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan will today personally hand over to Barisan Nasional chief Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad the application by Parti Bersatu Sabah to rejoin the ruling coalition.

This follows the mandate given by the supreme council after the PBS president called for closer ties with Kuala

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Kuala Lumpur during the party's annual delegates congress on Monday.

Secretary-general Raden Malek said yesterday Pairin will submit the application when he meets Dr Mahathir at the Prime Minister's Office.

The supreme council decided late Tuesday night to give the mandate to their leader to make the move towards rejoining the coalition which the PBS left just days before the general elections in

October 1990.

Thirty seven members were in favour of the decision while two others abstained. Another supreme council member, Datuk Kong Hong Ming, was not at the meeting.

The meeting was held at the end of the congress, where delegates gave the green light to party leaders to go ahead with the move with the reminder that PBS had once had a fractious relationship

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with the Barisan.

Pairin told reporters that statements by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Sabah Umno chief Datuk Musa Aman on the PBS move were seen by the supreme council as positive signs for the party.

Abdullah, in response to *The Star* report on Tuesday that PBS wanted to return to the Barisan fold, had said that the ruling party was prepared to consider PBS' application while Musa welcomed the party's move to have closer links with the coalition.

Pairin said PBS would not be imposing terms in its application adding: "We want to build up our communication with the Government and make them see aspects which have not been considered before."

To a question on whether this would include Barisan's two-year rotation system of the chief minister's post, which PBS had consistently opposed, Pairin said: "This is among matters we would bring up for discussion."

On whether there had been meetings between PBS and Barisan leaders to pave the way for re-entry, Pairin said: "We always meet in Parliament and they would ask when we are going to come in."

On dealing with Sabah Barisan leaders who ditched the PBS, Pairin said: "We were invited and we are responding positively."