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Gerakan welcomes possible return of PBS to the Barisan

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik today said the party welcomed Parti Bersatu Sabah to the Barisan Nasional as long as it was sincere and prepared to work for the betterment of BN and the country.

Speaking after chairing the party's central working committee meeting, he said Gerakan was prepared to "swallow its pride and forget its hurt" for the sake of unity and progress.

"I cannot forget that in 1986, I not only wrote a letter to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, but personally took PBS' application to join the BN to Dr Mahathir.

"However, when PBS left BN in 1990, it did not even have the courtesy to inform its friends. It still hurts, but if it is really sincere, then we welcome it" he said.

Yesterday, Dr Mahathir said there must be 100 per cent acceptance of PBS by all 14 component parties of BN or its application to rejoin the coalition would be rejected.

However, Dr Lim said Gerakan would assess its (PBS) sincerity and would also look at the demands of its youth wing.

He also said the party would play its role in explaining to all its Malay and non-Malay members nationwide what was meant by Dr Mahathir's recent declaration of Malaysia as an Islamic State.

"We want everyone to understand that their rights as citizens as stated in the Federal Constitution would in no way be taken away," he said.

He said the CWC also discussed ways in which Gerakan could play a more effective role to strengthen the BN.

"I also reminded the members that unity was vital in ensuring not only the future well being of the party but also of the nation as a whole," he said, adding that the meeting also discussed the dangers of extremism in politics.

Dr Lim said he, along with other party leaders, would visit members throughout the country to hold dialogues in an effort to strengthen ties and better understand any grievances they faced.

"We also want to explain to them Gerakan's stand on several national issues like the economy and Malaysia's entry into the World Trade Organisation," he said.

He said the CWC also decided that the party's branch-level election be held in March and April next year, followed by divisions (May and June); States (July and August) and their national party election sometime in September.

He said the date for their national assembly would be decided after discussing it with Dr Mahathir.

He said positions at all levels would be contested and there would be no conditions imposed.

On whether he would be defending his position, Dr Lim said: "I will with the nominations from the grassroots. If there is unanimous support from all, then I am prepared to defend my position."

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