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Pairin: I regret pulling PBS out of BN

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PUTRAJAYA, Thurs. - Parti Bersatu Sabah president Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan said today he regretted pulling the party out of the Barisan Nasional in 1990 to join the opposition front.

"We want to start afresh. I regretted what took place in 1990," he said after he and PBS vice-president Dr Maximus Johnity Ongkili handed over the party's application papers to rejoin the coalition to BN chief and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the PM's office.

He conveyed to Dr Mahathir that he regretted what happened 11 years ago.

Pairin also said PBS's application was without conditions.

"It is up to the BN to decide. We hope that our desire to rejoin will be accepted by all."

Describing the 45-minute meeting with Dr Mahathir as one conducted in "a happy atmosphere", he said he appreciated Dr Mahathir for "forgiving PBS and him" for the 1990 incident.

He said Dr Mahathir received him and Dr Ongkili "very well".

"We will have to wait for the decision on the application as this will come from the BN side."

Pairin said Dr Mahathir stressed the importance for all parties to work together, adding that he fully accepted the Prime Minister's views.

PBS was admitted to the BN on June 5, 1986, a year after it was formed. But just before the 1990 general election, the party pulled out to join the opposition front, spearheaded by the now-defunct Parti Melayu Semangat 46.

Explaining the party's decision to rejoin the BN, he said they did so in the hope of improving unity and working together in the country.

On the chances of BN accepting the party back to the fold, Pairin said:

"I am happy as there is a positive response from the Prime Minister. We do not know when they will come to a decision."

"I hope everyone will accept us," he added.

On whether there are conditions imposed by the BN, he said there was none.

On the conditions set by PBS Youth chief Almudin Kaida which, among others, include the scrapping of the rotation system and for Pairin to be appointed as Sabah Chief Minister, Pairin said this was touched on.

"PBS Youth is free to express its views, but the decision is still up to the PBS supreme council."

Meanwhile, BN secretary-general Tan Sri Mohamed Rahmat said the party's application would be deliberated and decided at the coalition's next supreme council meeting.