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PBS homecoming

IT is not surprising that Parti Bersatu Sabah, which abandoned the Barisan Nasional on the eve of the 1990 general election to join forces with the Opposition Gagasan Rakyat, will be applying to re-join the Barisan Nasional today. The collapse of the PBS State Government a month after the 1994 State election when several Assemblymen defected to the BN, and the crossing-over to the BN of another nine after the 1999 State election, show clearly that PBS cannot achieve much alone nor sustain itself too long on its own.

Political experimenting has not been beneficial to the State and its people and PBS has made the right decision in choosing to follow in the footsteps of its former Gagasan ally Parti Melayu Semangat 46 - which has been disbanded - whose members have re-joined Umno.

Talk about PBS's intention to return to the BN fold surfaced two years ago but the BN was not in favour of accepting it back then. However, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, being a forgiving kind of person, has assured PBS leaders and members that he will consider favourably their application.

Dr Mahathir needs only to consider PBS' commitment and sincerity to the Barisan Nasional. BN does not want to see what the Malays say: tidak mahu pisang berbuah dua kali (once bitten, twice shy).

If PBS is accepted, which we hope it will be, it will be a homecoming for the party which first joined the BN in 1985. However, it must behave and show its loyalty to the BN for graciously accepting it back.

Vitriolic attacks may be part and parcel of politics but political parties must have certain scruples. PBS must be a true friend to all the component parties in Barisan Nasional.

Granted, there are no permanent enemies and friends in politics. No one particular group in Malaysia can work in isolation even though it may be the majority race. As Dr Mahathir quips, PBS's application is a good thing to happen and the more, the merrier.

However, PBS must work hard to strengthen the coalition. It is important that it returns with an open mind and accepts the BN's philosophy and aspirations of national interest and unity above all else.

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