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Re-entry Permit

PBS KNOCKS ON BN DOOR FOR RE-ENTRY PERMIT

By: Jackson Sawatan

KOTA KINABALU, Nov 14 (Bernama) -- Many a delegate to the just concluded Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) 16th Congress skirted the subject and referred to it with different names and were careful not to over simplify the issue at hand-- applying for a BN re-entry permit.

Rarely did they make direct reference to the PBS re-joining the national ruling coalition, the Barisan Nasional (BN) -- instead they beat around the bush.

A delegate, for example, talked about moves to strengthen bilateral ties between the PBS and BN while others spoke about the possibility of the PBS being in the BN once again.

Others preferred to use innuendos by referring to the issue as the possibility of PBS working together with other parties

One delegate referred to it as "masuk kem dia orang" (to enter their camp) and another termed it as "pergi ke sebelah sana" (to go over to the other side).

Lahad Datu delegate, for example, began debating the issue by saying "on the very likely possibility of bilateral relations being established between the PBS and the Government."

He went on to say that the ties must be on condition that the PBS' identity as a multiracial party was preserved, the original struggle of the party be continued and members not be sidelined as the party pursued its new direction.

A delegate from Matunggong chose to term it as the party's goodwill policy towards BN and cautioned the party's leadership to consider implementing the policy carefully so as not to put the party on the losing end.

Among other things the Matunggong delegate proposed that their "Datuk President" be made the Chief Minister and for the electoral roll to be rid off phantom voters.

Other delegates suggested that the rotation system of the Sabah Chief Minister's post be scrapped and the need for the government to tackle the issue of illegal immigrants in the state and for the PBS to stick to its struggle.

Only one or two delegates made any direct reference to the PBS applying to rejoin the BN and they too reminded the party to do its homework properly before making any decision on the issue.

There were also some heated moments as the delegates pondered on the party's future prompting the Permanent Chairman, Claudius Sundang Alex to remind them to keep their temperature down.

Notwithstanding the variety of terms used to describe the re-entry proposal, most of the 19 delegates who debated the issue at the congress, agreed to let the party leadership decide on the future direction of the party.

A youth delegate however urged the party to forget the proposal for the time being and instead prepare for the next election so that the party could claim its rightful place at the helm of the state government.

After the Congress was adjourned, the party's supreme council members proceeded to their headquarters in Donggongon, Penampang, near here and began deliberating on the issue.

The decision came swiftly and after about two hours, PBS President Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan met reporters and told them that the party had

agreed to apply to re-join the BN.

"Based on the positive signal from the Deputy Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi) and (Sabah Umno Chief) Datuk Musa Aman, and taking into account the views and wishes of the delegates, we have decided to apply to rejoin the BN," Pairin said.

The decision was met with positive response from among the Sabah BN component parties.

Chief Minister Datuk Chong Kah Kiat who is Sabah BN Chairman said he was personally very happy with the decision.

"Sure...we are very open," he said when asked on whether the PBS stood a good chance to be readmitted into the coalition.

Asked whether there was any discussion between the PBS and the BN on the matter, Chong who is also the President of the Liberal Democratic Party merely said "we have been a very close friend."

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who is BN Chairman was also reported as saying that the BN would view the PBS application favourably.

A delegate said sincerity was vital to make the PBS-BN reconciliation successful.

"Both parties must show sincerity and forgive and forget the previous experience and work on a new relationship," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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