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PBS to attend State BN event

Joniston Bangkuai; Jaswinder Kaur

KOTA KINABALU, Fri. - Parti Bersatu Sabah leaders will make their first appearance in a Barisan Nasional event after 11 years when they attend the 12th Liberal Democratic Party congress here tomorrow.

PBS president Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan and eight party leaders will attend the opening of the LDP congress as observers, signalling another step towards reconciliation.

Others in the PBS delegation include deputy presidents Dr Yee Moh Chai and Awang Ku Aliuddin Pengiran Tahir and secretary-general Radin Malleh.

Pairin last week submitted to Prime Minister and BN chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad the PBS application to rejoin the BN which it left just before the 1990 general election.

The congress, to be held at the Magellan Sutera Resort here, will be opened by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who is also BN deputy chairman.

The LDP has also invited leaders of the 13 BN component parties to the opening of the congress.

LDP executive secretary Chin Yen Sang said this year's LDP congress is expected to be a quiet affair.

Besides the opening ceremony by Abdullah and the speech by party president Datuk Chong Kah Kiat, the congress will see the tabling of reports of the secretary-general and treasurer-general.

Chin said more than 800 delegates from 22 divisions and about 500 observers are expected to attend the congress.

Meanwhile, Land and Co-operative Development Minister Tan Sri Kasitah Gaddam said PBS' return to the BN augured well for national unity,

He said the party still commands significant backing from the non-Muslim Bumiputeras.

Kasitah, who is Kinabalu Umno chief, said it was practical for PBS to be in the mainstream of national politics to enable the Federal Government to bring more socio-economic development to rural residents in the State, who are largely from the Kadazandusun community.

He also noted that PBS' decision to rejoin the BN after 11 years of being in the Opposition, showed that the non-Muslim Bumiputera community was supportive of the ruling coalition.