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`PBS must pledge loyalty to BN'

PEKAN, Sun. - Parti Bersatu Sabah must pledge its loyalty to the Barisan Nasional if it wants to be accepted back into the coalition, Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said today.

He said the party would also have to convince all BN component parties of its sincerity in re-joining the coalition, admit its past mistakes and promise not to repeat them.

Najib said the BN welcomed parties which accepted its principles. But, he added that certain quarters doubted PBS' sincerity as it had a record of disloyalty.

"Thus, PBS has to make a pledge to BN president (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) that it would remain with BN at all times regardless of the situation in the country," he said.

Najib, who is also Defence Minister and Pekan Member of Parliament, said this after handing over copies of the Quran and cash aid to mosques and surau in the district, here, today.

Last week, PBS president Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan handed over the party's application to re-join the BN to Dr Mahathir.

The party's supreme council took the decision after a PBS delegates' meeting approved the move.

On Friday, Dr Mahathir said that there must be a 100 per cent acceptance of PBS by all 14 component parties of BN or the party's (PBS) application to re-join the coalition would be rejected.

In Kota Kinabalu, PBS deputy president Dr Yee Moh Chai said today the grassroots and the public understood why PBS applied to re-join the BN after 11 years.

He said Pairin had explained at length through the Press why the party decided to return to the BN fold.

"If there is a need for further explanation, I am sure we will consider it."

On whether there was any feedback from the grassroots on the party's decision, Dr Yee said division representatives had debated the idea at the party's annual congress early this week.

"That process is over... representatives aired their views at the congress and these views were discussed at the supreme council meeting," he said.

Asked to elaborate on party supreme council member Edmund Doudilim's decision to resign following the latest turn of events, Dr Yee said the party had not received his resignation letter.

Doudilim, who is PBS Petagas division chairman, claimed that the party leadership had secretly planned the move to re-join the BN and that he had lost confidence in Pairin's leadership.

PBS has nine Assemblymen in the 48-member State Legislative Assembly.

Meanwhile, former Deputy Chief Minister under the PBS rule, Datuk Aariah Tengku Ahmad, said the party's application to re-join the BN was timely as the country was facing mounting challenges economically, socially and in terms of security.

"It is the right time for PBS to be part of the coalition in light of the pressing need for national unity and political stability to ensure continued development," she said in a statement.

She said based on feedback from the grassroots, Pairin still commanded majority support from the Kadazandusun and Murut communities and

substantial support from the Muslim and Chinese electorate.

"He (Pairin) continues to be strong in the hearts of the people," she said.

She also expressed hope that if the PBS was accepted into the BN, it would not keep mute on pertinent issues but would continue to voice the problems of the people in a constructive manner and through proper channels.

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