

SUN 24 JAN 2002

# BN accepts PBS back to the fold

**KUALA LUMPUR, Wed:** Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) has been accepted unconditionally as a Barisan Nasional (BN) component party effective today.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is also the BN chairman, however, said PBS must abide by the BN regulations and not expect anything in return.

"BN has the right to make decisions pertaining to PBS and

its members," he told a press conference after chairing a BN supreme council meeting here.

Asked if PBS's re-entry into BN will result in cabinet positions for the party's leaders, Mahathir said: "No conditions were set and there is no promise. However, we can't deny any possibility."

On whether this will affect the Sabah chief minister's rotation system, he said: "We did not dis-

cuss that at all."

Mahathir also dismissed doubts that PBS's re-entry will cause problems in seat allocation in future general elections.

As for the assurance that PBS will not repeat its previous act of leaving BN, Mahathir said he could not give any guarantee on the matter.

He also said the meeting rejected applications from two other parties to join BN. They

were the Punjabi Party, and the Malaysian Indian Muslim Congress (Kimma).

He said the application from Indian Progressive Party (IPF) to join BN will be accepted but not as a single component party.

"We will come up with proposals on how IPF can join BN without being a component party. At the same time, MIC has agreed to take IPF into its fold," he said.

The PBS, which ruled Sabah from 1985 to 1994, left BN just before the 1990 general election. Last year, the party expressed its intention to return to BN's fold, and on Nov 15, its president, Joseph Pairin Kitingan, and his deputy, Dr Maximus Ongkili, submitted an application to Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.