

# It's official – PBS is now back in the Barisan fold

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KUALA LUMPUR: It's official. Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) is back in the Barisan Nasional as its 14<sup>th</sup> member, effective immediately.

However, applications from three other parties – Indian Progressive Front (IPF), Punjabi Party of Malaysia and the Malaysian Indian Muslim Congress (Kimma) – have been rejected.

The Barisan supreme council accepted PBS' application to rejoin the coalition from which it had pulled out at the eleventh hour in the 1990 general election.

Barisan chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said PBS' application was accepted without reservations, nor with any condition attached.

"This means that PBS did not put any condition in its application and we also did not promise it anything if it came back into Barisan.

"The party (PBS) only needs to adhere to Barisan rules and regula-

tions and we have the right to make decisions affecting the parties (Barisan) and their members," he told reporters after chairing the Barisan supreme council meeting attended by representatives from all the component parties yesterday.

The 200,000-strong PBS, which had been out of Barisan for the last 11 years, applied to rejoin the coalition in November, citing its aspirations towards creating a better understanding as the main reason.

Asked if the readmission of PBS would affect the present rotation system for the post of Sabah chief minister or that if PBS would be offered posts in the Federal Government, the Cabinet or state government, the Prime Minister said the matter remained to be seen.

"When the time comes we will talk about it. However, we cannot discount that possibility," he added.

When asked how sure Barisan was that PBS would not pull the

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same stunt it did on Oct 15, 1990, Dr Mahathir replied: "I don't have a crystal ball to predict things. Sometimes we just have to face things when they come."

On IPF's application, Dr Mahathir said that after some consideration, no consensus could be reached.

However, he said the MIC had again reiterated its willingness to absorb IPF into the party.

"So that is our decision. But at the same time we must look for a formula where IPF can fully contribute its support towards Barisan without becoming one of our component parties.

"We will give our full backing if IPF wants to join MIC," he added.

Asked about the reasons the applications by the Punjabi Party of Malaysia and Kimma were rejected, Dr Mahathir said Barisan was not that "open" that it would accept applications from just any organisation.

"If they support us, they can do so without becoming part of the coalition. The most important thing is that they believe in our struggle and our policies are compatible with theirs," he said.

He also said that there was a possibility that a few Barisan Youth and Wanita leaders would be appointed to the supreme council.

Dr Mahathir said he had briefed the council on the concept of the Islamic state as proposed by Umno and it was fully accepted by the leaders of all component parties.

"I also explained to them that our fight against extremism is not confined to any one race, but encompassed everyone involved in extreme activities, including trying to fan racial tensions.

"We all agreed that stern action should be taken against anyone involved in extremist activities," he added.

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