

# Five PBRs

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# to return to PBS fold

By MUGUNTAN VANAR

KOTA KINABALU: Crisis-hit Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRs), led by Tan Sri Joseph Kurup, is set to lose its five assemblymen in the aftermath of a two-month bitter leadership tussle.

The five are finalising their return to Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) headed by Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan.

But the fate of Pairin's younger brother Datuk Dr Jeffrey Kitingan hangs in the balance whether he will be allowed back to the fold for a third time after quitting his brother's party twice.

Confirming their intention to rejoin PBS which they quit with Dr Jeffrey on April 23, 2000, PBRs deputy president Datuk Louis Rampas, the Kiulu assemblyman, said: "We (the five assemblymen) have more or less decided that we are going back."

Rampas, with another PBRs deputy president Inanam assemblyman Johnny Goh, PBRs secretary-general Karim Adam (Kundasang), Atong Mengkabis (Matunggong), plus two party founding leaders Datuk Laimun Leiking and Datuk James Vitalis, met Pairin at his house on Friday.

PBRs Youth leader Edward Lingsu (Tamparuli) did not attend the meeting as he was in Kuala Lumpur.

He said they had discussed with Pairin the possibility of them returning to the PBS fold and the response was positive.

"We asked him if he was ready to receive us back and if he would forgive us," he said, adding that Pairin responded in the same way as Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who forgave

PBS and accepted the party back in Barisan Nasional in January.

Rampas said they also brought up the topic of Dr Jeffrey returning to PBS with them.

"We all left PBS together, we feel its best we return together," he said, adding that Pairin's response was that anyone was free to join the party if they subscribed to its struggles.

"We are sincere in wanting to go back for the sake of unity," he said adding that they would discuss the matter with the Barisan leadership in Kuala Lumpur.

Dr Jeffrey first quit PBS in 1994 to join PBRs and then to the now dissolved Parti Akar, which he left after a failed bid for the presidency. He returned to PBS in 1996 and his brother forgave him.

But he quit again two years ago and took along the five assemblymen to join PBRs that became the largest Kadanzandusun Sabah Barisan Nasional component party with seven assemblymen until PBS with nine assemblymen rejoined this year.

The move to leave the party comes in the wake of a bitter leadership struggle between Dr Jeffrey and Kurup following a tumultuous annual general meeting in which both claimed to be the president.

Dr Jeffrey has accepted the decision of the Registrar of Societies to recognise Kurup as the rightful president on March 15.

Kurup, whose camp had accused the assemblymen as siding with Dr Jeffrey during the height of the crisis, has invited the group to attend his April 11 supreme council meeting.

Rampas declined to say if he would go.