

23 JAN 2002  
Mahathir-PBS  
PBS READMITTED AS BN COMPONENT PARTY

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 23 (Bernama) -- Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) was today readmitted as a component party of the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that the PBS, which left the BN in 1990, was readmitted without any condition.

The PBS also did not set any condition to rejoin the BN, he told a media conference after chairing the BN's Supreme Council meeting at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here.

Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman, said that the PBS should abide by the rules and regulations of the BN and should not feel that its re-entry must be reciprocated by certain gestures.

"However, the BN has the right to make whatever decisions for the PBS and its members," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that the meeting rejected the applications of three other parties to join the BN. The parties are the Indian Progressive Front (IPF), Parti Punjabi and the Kongress India Muslim Malaysia (KIMMA).

The PBS' application to rejoin the BN was personally submitted by its president, Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan, to Dr Mahathir on Nov 15, last year.

Asked whether today's decision would lead to the scrapping of the rotation system of the chief minister's post in Sabah, he said the matter was not discussed at all.

Queried on how sure the BN was that the PBS would not leave the ruling coalition again, Dr Mahathir said: "I don't have a crystal ball which can foretell things. Sometimes things happen...we don't know."

Asked whether he expected problems would emerge later during the general election in terms of seat allocation, he said: "I don't expect anything...BN gets the support of the majority."

To a question on whether he was of the opinion that several parties representing the Kadazandusun people should merge, Dr Mahathir said it was up to them to make the decision.

Asked on the application by the IPF to rejoin the BN, he said that the MIC had again stated its readiness to admit the IPF into the MIC.

"But we were unable to reach a consensus on IPF's membership as a BN component party," he said.

At the same time, he said, the meeting felt that a way must be found to enable the IPF to take part in the BN but not as a component party.

Dr Mahathir said that he also provided an explanation on the concept of an Islamic state and all the BN component parties agreed that there was no problem over the matter.

Commenting on extremism, he said that action would be taken against anyone irrespective of race involved in such activities.

"Extremism is not restricted to only one race. All the races, if they were to be involved in extremist activities and attempts to incite racial sentiments, action will be taken against them," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that this was proof that there is no prejudice over the matter.

On whether the Indonesian government had issued a formal apology to Malaysia following serious problems created by workers from the republic here, he said no such apology had been received as far as he was concerned.

"(Foreign Minister) Datuk (Seri) Syed Hamid (Albar) has not told me

anything. So I presume we haven't received it," he added.

-- BERNAMA

MAM DC RM