

Party freeze

STAR 25 AUG 2003

Barisan tells PBDS that breakaway groups not the way to resolve crisis

KUALA LUMPUR: The Barisan Nasional does not want splinter groups from among its component members to form new parties as a way out of any crisis.

Barisan secretary-general Tan Sri Mohamed Rahmat said the dispute in the Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS) should not be resolved in the way that the Sarawak National Party (SNAP) resolved its crisis.

"There is no way that the Barisan will accept the SNAP formula to resolve the PBDS crisis," he told Bernama.

Mohamed said the position of PBDS in the Barisan was still in dispute.

The coalition, he added, did not want any more new parties to be formed as a way out, as was the case when SNAP was deregistered last year.

He said that because PBDS now had two sets of office bearers under their respective 'presidents', it could not at the moment be legally accepted to sit in the Barisan supreme council.

Both factions have referred the dispute to the Registrar of

Societies (ROS), he said, adding that he would raise the matter at the Barisan supreme council meeting today.

On July 11, a faction in the PBDS, led by Datuk Seri Daniel Tajem declared it had won all posts without a fight.

The rival group, led by Datuk Seri Dr James Masing, was technically shut out during the nomination process on the ground that the branches supporting them were deemed to be not duly registered with the ROS.

On June 25, Datuk Amar Leo Moggie, who had led the party since its formation 20 years ago, surprisingly sent in his resignation letter in a move seen as an attempt to avert a challenge between Tajem and Masing for the top post at the party's July 26-27 triennial delegates conference.

His resignation automatically made Tajem, then deputy president, the party president in accordance with the constitution.

On July 24, the Masing faction elected Masing as presi-

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Mohamed: There seems no way out

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dent with its own set of office-bearers as an alternative to the one led by Tajem.

Mohamed said the decision by the Tajem faction to deny 103 branches supporting Masing of accreditation to contest in the party polls was "disputable."

He said he had earlier tried to mediate through a no-contest formula, under which Tajem would be made president and Masing, deputy president.

"It did not work out because Tajem could not give an undertaking to stop anyone from challenging Masing for the deputy president's post," Mohamed said.

He said the split in PBDS had reached a very serious stage with both factions refusing to budge.

"I see there is no way they can settle the dispute. I've talked to both sides but the Tajem-Masing split has become too personal," he said.

On the position of SNAP following a court decision to grant a stay of execution of the ROS' decision pending an appeal to the Home Ministry, Mohamed said it would have to exhaust all legal means before the Barisan could decide on its status.

In the meantime, SNAP could not be automatically re-admitted into the BN, he said, adding: "It will have to apply for readmission if it resolves its legal status."

In **Kuching**, SNAP president Edwin Dundang said the party had submitted its application to rejoin the Barisan to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohammad.

"This is in accordance with the prime minister's advice when a SNAP delegation that I led met him in his office in Putrajaya on July 9," he said, adding that the application was submitted a day after the meeting.

Meanwhile, the PBDS faction led by Tajem is "unaware" of any mediation effort by Mohamed to work out a compromise.

Its secretary-general Stanley Ajang Batok said yesterday: "Our party leaders, including our president Daniel Tajem, could not recollect at any point of time of (Mohamed) Rahmat mentioning anything about a compromise formula."