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`SNAP can't rejoin BN if it contests as Opposition'

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - The Sarawak National Party (SNAP) risks being barred from re-admittance into Barisan Nasional if the party contests as the Opposition in the general election, BN secretary-general Tan Sri Mohamed Rahmat said today.

Instead of toying with the idea of fielding candidates in the polls, Mohamed said SNAP leaders should concentrate on resolving the problem of the party's deregistration by the Registrar of Societies.

"I leave it to the party leadership's wisdom," he said.

He said the BN supreme council, during its meeting last week, had maintained that since SNAP had been declared illegal by the ROS, it had also ceased to be a member of the coalition.

Mohamed was responding to a news report that the party's central executive committee had decided to re-activate its 62 branches to prepare for parliamentary elections, due in early 2005.

The decision is seen as a possible move for the party, which was once a formidable force in Sarawak BN, to start mobilising its election machinery.

SNAP was said to be interested in wresting back the Mas Gading, Saratok, Bintulu and Baram parliamentary seats currently held by the Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party (SPDP), the latest Sarawak-based party to join the BN.

SPDP, formed as a splinter party of SNAP following a leadership crisis, is led by vice-president Datuk William Mawan Ikom.

Last week, BN chairman and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said SNAP had ceased to be a BN member.

He said the party could re-apply to join the coalition if the court decided in its favour later.