

24/08/2003

'Expulsion if BN party fails to abide by no-crossover ruling'

Zubaidah Abu Bakar; Patrick Sennyah; Chow Kum Hor

A BARISAN Nasional party may be expelled if it accepts an elected representative from another component partner as a member, coalition secretary-general Tan Sri Mohamed Rahmat said.

He said the no-crossover ruling was made at the BN supreme council meeting in January and all component parties must abide by the ruling or face disciplinary action, which includes expulsion.

"We have made a rule that any crossover will not be allowed unless it is sanctioned by the supreme council," he said after the official opening of the 32nd Gerakan national delegates' conference.

The conference was opened by Prime Minister and BN chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"This (expulsion) is nothing new," Mohamed said.

He said the BN hoped there would be no crossovers involving component party members after the case of two Penang Gerakan Assemblymen who crossed over to MCA soon after the 1999 general election.

The two elected representatives - Jawi Assemblywoman Tan Cheng Liang and Datuk Keramat Assemblyman Lim Boo Cheng - had been suspended by the BN supreme council for indiscipline in November last year for not voting against an Opposition motion at the Penang State Assembly to postpone the implementation of the Penang Outer-Ring Road project.

Their case will be reviewed at the BN management committee meeting to be chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who is also BN deputy chairman on Monday.

Mohamed said the BN supreme council took it very seriously when Tan and Lim decided to cross over after winning their seats under the MCA ticket.

He also said their action at the Penang State Assembly was tantamount to backstabbing as it was practically an effort by MCA to wrest power from Gerakan as the former was thinking that it had the right to rule in Penang because it had more seats.

"It is an action which can be interpreted as undermining the State Government, which is a serious matter as it is a case of a component party trying to take over the State Government," he said.

Mohamed said if any party were to claim the Penang Chief Minister's post, it would be Umno because the party has the most number of state seats.

"But Umno has conceded that Penang should be governed by a non-Malay component party, which is Gerakan and that position stands."

Mohamed also said if cross-overs, which were common in Sabah, became rampant in future, the BN might propose it be declared illegal.

"For now, that's only a rule. If it is rampant, maybe we will have to look at other ways to solve the problem. The election laws are also silent about this," he said.

On the position of the Sarawak National Party, Mohamad said the party is no longer a BN member.

If it wins an appeal in court to get its deregistration by the Registrar of Societies revoked, it must submit an application for readmission, he said.

Mohamed said the problem in Parti Bangsa Dayak Sarawak, which now has two sets of leaders, would also be on the agenda of Monday's meeting.