

**Sabah MPs divided over ultimatum to BN**  
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**Beh Lih Yi**

MPs from Sabah were divided over Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) president Yong Teck Lee's ultimatum to give Barisan Nasional until August to resolve the issues in the state or risk seeing a mass MCPX defection to the opposition.

Yong Teck Lee was quoted in media reports today as saying that it is now the best time for the ruling coalition to do something for Sabah or there will be no guarantee that SAPP members will remain in BN after August.

Approached for comments, Sabah MPs were divided in their views.

Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS) president Joseph Kurup, who is also deputy rural and regional development minister, said there is no need for the ultimatum to be issued.

"The question (of defection) does not arise at all for PBRS," the Pensiangan MP told reporters at the Parliament lobby.

**'Let the dust settle first'**

Umno's Kota Belud MP Abdul Rahman Dahlan appealed for time to be given to Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to resolve the issues in Sabah.

"The demands will be studied by the prime minister. It's just two-and-a-half months after the elections, let the dust settle first.

"I think the message is clear to the prime minister. But to be fair to him, give him time to decide. I am sure we can't do something overnight," said the Umno Youth secretary.

Abdul Rahman appeared to agree when asked if August gave enough time to Abdullah to resolve the matter. "Yes, why not? It's not a problem," he said.

He explained that certain issues can be done by the government immediately such as the appointment of a director from Sabah or Sarawak in state-owned Petronas, positions for them in government-linked companies and increase of allocations for MPs from the two states.

**PM is thinking**

Umno's Kalabakan MP Abdul Ghapur Salleh echoed similar views.

"Pak Lah (Abdullah) is a calm man, he is thinking of what to do," said the vocal backbencher, who rejected the offer of becoming a deputy minister after the March 8 elections.

Abdul Ghapur also urged other BN MPs not to question the right of Sabahan MPs to speak up.

This was in reference to Mohamad Aziz (BN-Sri Gading) who yesterday said that MPs from Sabah and Sarawak should not be ungrateful and complain about the lack of representation at the federal level.

"We don't need anybody to reply on behalf of the prime minister," said Abdul Ghapur, adding that their criticism was aimed at improving the government's leadership.

"If not because of the 54 seats delivered by Sabah and Sarawak MPs, the federal government would have fell to the opposition," he said.

To a question, Abdul Ghapur said he is personally not aware of any defection by BN MPs.

The issue of possible defections by Sabah and Sarawak MPs has hogged the limelight in Parliament since last week when Anifah Aman (BN-Kimanis) openly said that such a move cannot be discounted.

Anifah warned that the Sabah MPs would defect to Pakatan Rakyat unless something was done to correct the situation.

Several other Sabahan backbenchers shared the same sentiment in their debates on the royal address later, including Abdul Ghapur, who voiced his displeasure with the apparent unfair treatment meted out by BN.

Speculations are rife that a large number of BN MPs from Sabah would be crossing over to Pakatan Rakyat, which is short of 30 seats to gain a simple majority to take over the federal government.

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