

Paid overseas holidays won't stop crossovers
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Leaders of the opposition Pakatan Rakyat are tickled by the reported two-week overseas holidays government MPs had been told to take beginning this Sunday to Sept 19.

Backbenchers Club chairperson Tiong King Sing has however denied that the overseas trips were a ploy to get Barisan Nasional MPs out of the clutches of Pakatan, which is seeking to poach enough defectors to form a new government on Sept 16.

Pakatan leaders said whatever attempt being made to try and hold back government MPs who have decided to join the opposition will be a futile exercise.

"How long can you hold them back? One week? Two weeks? If they have already made up their mind, they will cross sooner or later," said PRK leader See Chee How.

bung moktar tiong king sing 190408He was commenting on the Star report quoting BBC chief Tiong (right), who is Bintulu MP, as saying that government MPs had been invited to go on a overseas 'study trip' ahead of Sept 16.

"The BN should treat the MPs with respect, and not like cattles or sheep," said See, who is state PKR legal adviser and Stampin division chief .

Opposition leader and newly-elected Permatang Pauh MP Anwar Ibrahim has expressed confidence that Pakatan will have enough support from BN parliamentarians to form the government by that date.

A rouse to flush out defectors?

Most of Barisan MPs, especially in Sarawak and Sabah, whose names have been frequently mentioned as likely to join Pakatan are playing their cards very close to the chest.

Meetings between them and PKR leaders have taken place under a shroud of secrecy.

According to PKR sources, many of the meetings were held not in MPs' home states with some even outside the country, or the parliamentarians were represented by their trusted aides.

The all-expenses-paid holidays for the BN parliamentarians could be a rouse for the ruling BN coalition to flush out likely defectors.

"But they will never find out," one PKR leader told Malaysiakini.

Local Chinese newspapers, quoting various sources, say about 12 BN representatives each from Sarawak and Sarawak and at least 16 from Peninsular Malaysia are expected to join Pakatan.

The exact number will probably not be known until it actually happens.

2008 election results for Sabah and Sarawak 120508 But one deputy minister from Sarawak told a close friend he had been approached by Pakatan. He indicated that if fresh polls are held, he is likely to stay out of the race.

"This has been taken to mean that he is probably not confident he will be able to win should he contest on a BN ticket," he said.

The Star report also quoted Kapit MP Alexander Nanta that he had been asked by fellow MPs from Sarawak "if he was available" for the planned overseas trips organised by the Backbenchers Club.

But he had already been invited earlier by the government to join Commodities and Plantation Industries Minister Peter Chin on a oil-palm campaign mission overseas to London and Belgium. He left today.

Malaysiakini understands that Hulu Rajang MP Billy Abit, whose name has frequently cropped up as a likely defector, had also been invited to go on what the BBC described as an agricultural study trip overseas.

But he told his colleagues that he had taken too many trips overseas and he would stay put this time.

Sapp leaders not at PM's function

Sabah Progressive Party (Sapp) secretary-general Richard Yong told Malaysiakini he had heard his party colleague, Sepanggar MP Eric Majimbun, had also been invited on such an overseas trip this weekend but he too could not make it.

Similarly the party's Tawau MP Chua Soon Bui also told Malaysiakini that she would also not be going on the trio due to her prior engagements.

Majimbun and Chua are Sapp's only MPs. The party had publicly declared its support for a no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

During his 'Buka Puasa' visit to Kota Kinabalu earlier this week, Abdullah found Sapp leader Yong Teck Lee - his most vocal critic within the BN - and the rebel party's two MPs conspicuously absent from the function.

"They had prior engagements, and so they could not make it," was how the party secretary-general put it when asked by Malaysiakini.

sarawak fuel hike demo kuching 080306 wan zainal Meanwhile, Sarawak PKR advisor Wan Zainal Wan Senusi (left) said in a press statement yesterday that at least three MPs from his state would join Pakatan.

He reiterated the party's line that Pakatan has already more than 40 MPs in the bag. They will bolster the present 81 opposition MPs in Parliament to form a relatively stable government.

"This will set a new chapter in the politics of Malaysia," he added.

Wan Zainal said he was perplexed as to why the BN viewed such crossovers as immoral

since they had accepted such defections in the past in Sarawak and Sabah, citing the case of the Joseph Pairin Kitingan-led Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS).

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