

Ex-Sabah Umno MPs join Bersatu

Pakatan now nine seats short of two-thirds majority, says Dr M

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PUTRAJAYA: Pakatan Harapan is only nine seats shy of a two-thirds majority in the Dewan Rakyat following Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia's "successful acquisition" of four former Umno lawmakers from Sabah.

With the latest signing of Datuk Seri Dr Ronald Kiandee (Beluran), Datuk Abdul Rahim Bakri (Kudat), Datuk Azizah Mohd Dun (Beaufort) and Datuk Zakaria Mohd Edris (Libaran), the ruling coalition now has 129 seats.

Together with 10 seats from its partners in Sabah – nine from Parti Warisan Sabah and one from Upko – the government commands 139 seats in the 222-seat Parliament where 148 seats are needed to achieve a two-thirds majority.

Bersatu chairman Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday presented the party's membership cards to the four MPs as well as two Sabah assemblymen, Datuk Hajiji Mohd Noor (Sulaman) and Datuk Seri Masidi Manjun (Karanaan).

Senators Datuk John Ambrose and Datuk Abdul Ghani Yassin, both formerly of Umno, have also joined Bersatu, which will launch its Sabah chapter on April 6.

At a press conference, Dr Mahathir gave assurance that Bersatu's presence in Sabah was to support the state government led by Warisan, saying that they had no intention of replacing any party.

"We want to be in Sabah only to support the Warisan government.

"That is Bersatu's stand as well as the stand of our members in the state," he said.

Dr Mahathir said despite not being a member of the government coalition, Pakatan supported Warisan forming the Sabah government and had given its MPs positions in the Cabinet.

Dr Mahathir said six other ex-Umno assemblymen would be joining the party and would look into the possibility of Sipitang MP Yamani Hafez Musa – son of former Sabah chief minister Tan Sri Musa Aman – coming into the fold.

"He will not be joining us yet.

"We need to study his record and commitment to the party and Pakatan before we can accept him," explained the Pakatan chairman.

On Kiandee's position as the Public Accounts Committee chairman, Dr Mahathir said he would not be asked to step down even though he was now a Pakatan MP.

"It is a matter of policy of the government. But it is not something that is institutionalised or part of the Constitution.

"No, I will not ask him to step down," said Dr Mahathir.

During the 14th General Election, Pakatan pledged to appoint an opposition MP to head the PAC and Kiandee was appointed in August, making him the first opposition lawmaker to helm the post in Dewan Rakyat's history.

Hajiji meanwhile said former Umno assemblymen had chosen Bersatu to be their new party as they believed in its struggle and hoped Dr Mahathir's assurance that Bersatu's presence in Sabah was not to take over from any party would allay concerns, particularly from Warisan.

He, however, declined to comment when asked if he would be made the pro-tem committee chairman.

"PM did indicate that but I think it is up to him to announce.

"I can't say more. I am willing to take up the mandate if given the responsibility," he said.

Watch the video
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