

# Anwar expected to end impasse

## PM off to Sabah to broker deal with parties calling for 'true unity state govt'

**KOTA KINABALU:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim is set to fly into the Sabah capital today to broker a peace deal among the three warring parties in Sabah, which are calling for Gabungan Rakyat Sabah (GRS) chairman Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor to be replaced and for a "true" unity state government.

However, GRS is proposing for the status quo to remain but with Pakatan Harapan on board the state government.

Anwar will be arriving amid the claim by Hajiji, who insists that he still has the majority to remain as chief minister while Sabah Barisan Nasional chairman Datuk Seri Bung Mokhtar Radin is saying that the "game is on".

The embattled Hajiji has showed his strength by handing over statutory declarations of support from 44 assemblymen, including seven Pakatan Harapan and five Sabah Barisan-Umno dissidents, to Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Juhar Mahiruddin during a one-hour meeting on Saturday.

However, on arrival from Kuala Lumpur where he had met Barisan chairman Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi on Saturday, Bung told reporters that the "ball is in play" and dismissed Hajiji's majority as "corrupted".

He was referring to the alleged "snatching" of five of the 17 Sabah Barisan-Umno assemblymen to get the majority in the 79-member state assembly, which is expected to hold a meeting tomorrow (Tuesday) to discuss a Bill on gas supply regulations.

Bung said Anwar, who will touch down in Sabah from Jakarta at about 8pm, is expected to discuss with all of them - GRS, Barisan and Warisan - to find solutions to the current political stalemate in Sabah.

"I don't think there will be a swearing-in at the Istana before



**Leadership meet:** Hajiji (centre) with party leaders after a meeting with GRS, Pakatan Harapan and Barisan Nasional leaders in Kota Kinabalu. — Bernama

that," Bung said without disclosing further details.

Both Hajiji and his state Cabinet were originally scheduled to be sworn in before the governor today.

It is learned that Barisan, Warisan and Parti Kesejahteraan Demokratik Masyarakat (KDM) are pushing for a "true" unity Sabah government involving all parties including Pakatan Harapan and GRS component parties.

A source told *The Star* that as part of their "peace deal", the state opposition parties were also pushing for Hajiji to be replaced as he was said to be "party-less".

They are ready to allow GRS' component parties - Sabah STAR president Datuk Seri Dr Jeffrey Kitingan or any of the party leaders from Barisan or Warisan - to lead the unity government in Sabah.

"It must be a true unity government. Everyone must be included - GRS, Pakatan, Barisan, Warisan and KDM," said a source, adding that they would be proposing this during the meeting.

It is learned that GRS will be proposing to maintain the status quo of the GRS-Barisan government but will bring in Pakatan into the state government.

Anwar, who left for Jakarta yesterday, is likely to fly straight into Kota Kinabalu after a two-day official visit to the Indonesian capital and is expected to be joined by his deputy Ahmad Zahid, who is also flying in today.

The Prime Minister is to hold peace talks with the embattled chief minister, Bung and Parti Warisan president Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal over the political crisis trig-

gered by Sabah Barisan's move to pull out its support from the GRS government.

Although it is understood that the Istana Negeri is waiting for the outcome of this last-minute bid to bring calm back to the state, sources have described it as a "tall order" at this point.

On Saturday, Anwar told reporters that he would give special attention to developments in Sabah after returning from Jakarta and insisted that the situation was still "calm".

He said he had also spoken to Hajiji on the matter and that he was made to understand that Ahmad Zahid, who is also Umno president, had spoken to Bung.

On Saturday, accompanied by senior Sabah Barisan leaders, Bung met Ahmad Zahid and Barisan deputy chairman Datuk Seri

Mohamad Hassan in Kuala Lumpur.

The Kinabatangan MP posted several photos of the meeting on Facebook but did not disclose what they talked about.

Asked if the state assembly meeting tomorrow is still on, Sabah Speaker Datuk Seri Kadzim Yahya replied briefly in a text: "I don't remember cancelling it."

As of yesterday, Sabah Pakatan remains the kingmaker with its seven assemblymen because both GRS and the Barisan-Warisan group do not have the magical 40 seats needed for a simple majority in the 79-seat state assembly.

But at the same time that Sabah Pakatan is backing Hajiji to remain as chief minister, it is also pushing for a unity government.

Sources said the state palace is seeking the state Attorney General's legal advice on the validity of the claims by Barisan and Warisan that the chief minister was without party after he ditched Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia to become a direct member of GRS.

GRS secretary-general Datuk Seri Masidi Manjun has since argued that GRS allowed for direct membership and not necessarily only for parties to become members.

Both Warisan and Barisan are also arguing that Hajiji no longer has the locus standi to be chief minister as the Sabah constitution requires the one holding the post to be the leader of a political party with the highest number of seats.

Masidi, however, has countered that Hajiji is a legitimate, chief minister as he has more than enough majority seats in the state assembly.

He also pointed out that based on a previous court judgment which had clearly interpreted Sabah's constitutional requirements for the appointment of the chief minister, it has to be a leader with more than 50% of seats in the state assembly.