

## **Bersatu confirms spreading wings to Sabah**

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**15/02/2019**

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 15 (Bernama) -- Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu) has agreed to spread its wings to Sabah, Bersatu chairman Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Dr Mahathir, who is the Prime Minister, said the Sabah chapter of Bersatu would be established soon and the person to head it would be determined later.

Addressing the media after chairing a meeting of the Bersatu Supreme Leadership Council here, he said the primary reason for Bersatu to establish its Sabah chapter was to enable Sabah UMNO members who had quit their party to join Bersatu.

He said these former Sabah UMNO members did not wish to join Parti Warisan Sabah (Warisan), the Sabah ruling party which is friendly to the Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition that comprises Bersatu, PKR, DAP and Amanah.

“A problem arose when the UMNO leaders quit their party and Sabah UMNO was dissolved. They did not wish to join Warisan and wanted to join Bersatu,” he said.

Dr Mahathir said those who wanted to join Bersatu would be subjected to a tight screening.

“The three conditions we have set are that they must quit UMNO, become independent elected representatives for some time, and they will have to undergo a tight selection process, individually and not as a group,” he said.

Dr Mahathir said Bersatu was spreading its wings to Sabah not to challenge or oppose Warisan, which was led by Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Shafie Apdal.

He also said that anyone could join Bersatu in Sabah except the members of fellow component parties of PH, namely PKR, DAP and Amanah, and Warisan.

Asked whether the decision to open the Sabah chapter was discussed with the Warisan leadership, Dr Mahathir said there was no necessity to do that.

"We are going to Sabah to strengthen Shafie's government; we are not opposing Warisan. We made the decision after studying the situation in Sabah where they (former UMNO members) did not want to join Warisan but wanted to join Bersatu," he said, adding that the decision did not require the agreement of the other component parties of PH.

On the upcoming Semenyih state by-election, Dr Mahathir said he hoped that the voters of the constituency would accept the Bersatu candidate.

Bersatu yesterday named Muhammad Aiman Zainali, 30, as its candidate for the by-election on March 2.

Muhammad Aiman, the treasurer of the Bersatu Hulu Langat division, is an engineer who is pursuing a doctorate in electrical engineering at Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), Shah Alam.

He is also the son-in-law of Bakhtiar Mohd Nor, the Semenyih assemblyman whose death has necessitated the by-election. Bakhtiar died of a heart attack on Jan 11 at the age of 57.

Responding to a question on a gaming company's sponsorship of a group of senior police officers on a visit to Istanbul to attend training on the combating of online gambling, Dr Mahathir said it was improper although the intention was good.

"It (the approval) happened before our (PH government) time. The purpose was good but, of course, it had some criticism against it," he said.

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