

Avoid religious issues, PM tells politicians

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Y KOTA KINABALU, Thurs. — Political parties in Sabah should be cautious and not raise religious and racial issues, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He reminded politicians that because of the many ethnic groups professing different faiths, it was dangerous to exploit racial and religious sentiments.

"There is a danger of lighting up a fire which will be difficult to put out.

"We would like to see in Sabah, or for that matter any other States in Malaysia, a responsible Government committed to moulding a united and progressive people."

The Federal Government, he said, would continue to nurture and support them.

Opening the 22nd Usno congress at Wisma Muis, he commended the Usno leadership

over its acceptance of all Bumiputeras irrespective of their religions into the party.

He hoped this policy would continue to enable the people to feel secure under the party.

Present at the ceremony were leaders of Barisan Nasional component parties including Umno secretary-general Datuk Mohamed Rahmat, MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu and leaders of political parties in Sarawak.

Rousing welcome

There was no representative from the ruling Parti Bersatu Sabah, which is a member of the Barisan Nasional. Chief Minister Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan, who is PBS president and State BN chairman, is believed to be away on leave.

Dr Mahathir was given a

rousing traditional welcome when he arrived to open the congress at Wisma Muis by a large gathering of Usno members and supporters.

Earlier, the Prime Minister and Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah were given a similar welcome on arrival at the airport here by some 20,000 people.

Present at the airport were Usno president Tun Datu Haji Mustapha Datu Harun, Deputy Chief Ministers Datuk Joseph Kurup (PBS secretary-general) and Datuk Ahmad Bahrom Titingan (PBS deputy president), Deputy Labour Minister Kalkau Untol (Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat deputy president) and Usno leaders.

Forty Bajau horsemen escorted Dr Mahathir to the Tanjung Aru Beach Hotel.

A large gathering lined the route from the airport to the hotel.