

SABAHAN CAN BE PM

By P.K. Katharason

KOTA KINABALU, Thurs. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad launched Umno Sabah today, saying that the party can provide the opportunity for a Sabahan to be Prime Minister one day.

He said that if a Sabahan becomes Umno president, and if tradition is kept and the party remains strong, "God willing, the Umno president from Sabah will become Prime Minister."

For this to happen, the Prime Minister said Sabahans must not behave as only *anak Sabah* but as *anak Malaysia* and hold true to it.

"We must consider ourselves as bumiputras and Malays who are Umno members," he said to thunderous applause from thousands of people at the opening of Usno's 23rd congress and launching of Umno in Sabah.

Dr Mahathir said the dream

of a Sabahan becoming Prime Minister would be just that if an Umno leader from Sabah contested a post in the party supreme council on a platform of "we are Sabahans."

He said no one could be a leader of Umno with only the support of members from one state, nor could anyone hope to win a general election with the support of only its party members.

The party president said that in the last elections, Umno lost in Kelantan because of parochialism, and only Kelantanese were attracted to Semangat 46 as they wanted a Kelantanese to be Prime Minister.

Some felt that Umno might lose and teamed up with Semangat 46 to stab Barisan Nasional in the back but ended up stabbing themselves, he said during the hour long address.

Dr Mahathir said Umno had no intention of colonising the people of Sabah as alleged by certain quarters.

He said that if the Malays had any such intention, they could have retained the name of Tanah Melayu and not agree with the other races to change it to Malaysia when the federation was set up with Sabah and Sarawak in 1963.

The Prime Minister said that Umno only aimed to serve and strive for the people of Sabah, and unite the bumiputras in the state.

"We want a Sabah government whose ministers are always in touch with the people."

He said Umno Sabah hoped to take over the state administration, now held by a government some of whose ministers were *mentri balak*.

But if Umno was to form the next state government, it must open its doors to every Malay and bumiputra who wished to join the party, he said.

Dr Mahathir said restricting Umno Sabah to only Usno

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members would not take the party far, because it might not do better than Usno in the last elections.

The Umno Sabah membership, he said, should be opened to those who at one time might have betrayed Usno, even those from PBS.

Dr Mahathir said some feared the entry of Umno into Sabah because of their positions.

He said PBS was now proposing a coalition government but "if Semangat 46 was the ruling party at federal level, will PBS have a coalition?"

Without accepting or rejecting the proposal, Dr Mahathir asked those at the congress who feared the entry of Umno. They replied: "Pairin."

Dr Mahathir said Umno co-operated with PBS and Usno in the Barisan Nasional but PBS did not even give a seat to one of its ministers for working closely with the Federal Government.

He also criticised Mr Jeffrey Kitingan (brother of Chief Minister Datuk *Pairin* Kitingan) for stirring anti-Malaysia feelings among Sabahans.