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MAHATHIR SAYS ANTI-FEDERAL GOVT IN SABAH AN OBSTACLE  
Mahathir-interview

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KOTA KINABALU, Sept 21 (Bernama) -- The Federal government's keen desire to help Sabah and its people is being thwarted by the state government's anti-federal stance, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says.

+We are prevented from proving that we have no evil intentions towards the people of Sabah by a very anti-Federal state government,+ he said in an interview with the Sabah Times published today.

The interview took place during the Prime Minister's visit to Tawau on Thursday to address the Barisan National Youth gathering held in conjunction with the Malaysia Day Celebration.

It was his first official visit to the east coast town since becoming Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir said the Sabah government wanted to fan the flames of parochial sentiments for its own purpose and not for the good of the Sabah people.

+In time, Sabahans will realise that these politicians are only fighting so that they can dominate,+ he added when asked how he hoped to eradicate anti-federal sentiments. -- more

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Mahathir-interview 2 Kota Kinabalu

He said: +They seem to have a sort of an idea that you want to be a big man in a small world rather than a small man in a big world. This is what they have in mind.+

Asked whether the politics of sentiments was far more effective than politics of development in Sabah, he said this was basically true but it was rather unfortunate because it was divisive.

+Development can benefit all as you cannot build a road only for one community as anybody can use the road. However, if you start playing sentiments, the development of the state will be retarded... this is because every time you want to do something each one is going to ask how it is going to benefit his special group or race,+ he added.

On the future of Usno, Sabah's oldest political party most of whose members have joined Umno, Dr Mahathir said both Usno and Umno could co-exist in the political scenario of Sabah.

However, this would depend on the people of Sabah as there was no problem in the co-existence of both Usno and Umno, he added. -- more

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Mahathir-Interview 3 Kota Kinabalu

Dr Mahathir, who is also Barisan Nasional chairman, said the people of Sabah could either become members of Usno or Umno but they should not go against each other.

Umno would accept it if the people wished for Usno to be absorbed into Umno, he added.

+If it is the preference of the people of Sabah to strengthen Umno, then it is their choice,+ he said when asked to comment on recent reports that the decision on the future of Usno would depend on him as BN chairman.

He said whatever it was, both Usno and Umno would remain as part of Sabah's history +as, in many ways the history of Usno is also the history of Umno+.

This was because a lot of guidance and inspiration was given by Umno stalwarts when Usno was first founded, he added.

He said it was important that Umno should not be regarded as Usno by another name. -- more

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Mahathir-interview 4 Kota Kinabalu

+So in a way, Usno is an extension of the struggle of Umno,+ he added.

Dr Mahathir stressed that Umno did not want to spread its wings to Sabah because of certain sensitivities but it was forced to do so because of Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan.

He also said it did not mean that only by joining Umno, the bumiputeras could be united as it could be achieved in many ways.

+We can work together with other parties as well. There is no desire on the part of Umno to eliminate other bumiputera parties and become the sole party for bumiputeras,+ he added.

Dr Mahathir said the Internal Security Act was not being used against Sabah.

He added: +In the peninsular, more people have been detained under ISA. Only those who disrupt the society will be detained. Those people who tried to agitate racial sentiments and destabilise the situation are the ones detained under ISA.

+The Sabah government of course has once played this issue on the basis of sentiments. -- more

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- Mahathir-interview 5 (last) Kota Kinabalu

+We can give any number of names of people in the Peninsular, including Finance Minister Anwar Ibrahim, who was once under detention.

+But, today, he is a Minister. We have also similar cases in the government.+

Dr Mahathir said the problem with some Sabah people was that they wanted to be national leaders but think only of Sabah.

+You cannot do that. You must be a Malaysian and not a Sabahan. Jeffery (Datuk Dr Jeffery Kitingan) once asked if a Sabahan can become the Prime Minister?

+A Sabahan cannot become the Prime Minister but a Malaysian can. If you are by sentiment purely a Sabahan, you will never make it because nobody is going to vote for you. You can win in Sabah but you can never win in other parts of the country with such sentiments.+

Touching on Pairin's proposal that Malaysia Day be celebrated on Sept 16, Dr Mahathir said: +We should not use these date to make a distinction between the date of Sabah and Sarawak's independence.

+We should not be divisive. Over emphasis on Sept 16 of course would be divisive and purposely trying to play up Sept 16 is actually an attempt to divide Malaysia.+ -- Bernama

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