

Dr M: Chance for Sabah folk to decide their future

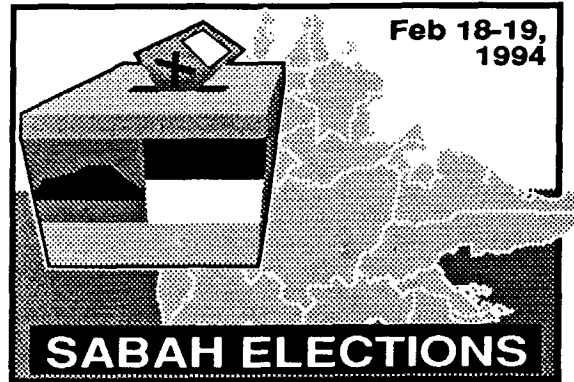
KOTA KINABALU, Tues. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Feb 18-19 State elections give a chance for Malaysians in Sabah to determine the direction of their future.

In an open letter published in all the local newspapers today, he urged the people to give Barisan Nasional the mandate for a "New Sabah" — a Sabah whose potentials are fully realised and whose children will inherit its wealth and prosperity intact.

"This is your chance. Your vote can bring about another five years of economic stagnation or a future of economic dynamism. The choice is with you and with no one else," he said.

The letter was published in four languages — Bahasa Malaysia, English, Kadazan and Chinese.

He said it was the people of Sabah who would decide whether Sabah should continue to lag behind the other States or become a dy-



namic new Sabah.

"It is you who must decide whether the welfare of Sabahans should be sacrificed because of the quarrels and bitterness of a few Sabah leaders," he said.

Dr Mahathir said as the leader of the Barisan, he was seeking the support of the people of Sabah for greater coalition which would lead to an economic miracle in Sabah.

He said Malaysia had achieved peace, progress and stability for more than

37 years. He said Malaysians of whatever race or religion are doing well in their endeavours.

The Prime Minister said the Barisan's interest was only to help Sabah get its share of the prosperity.

"We stand on the threshold of the 21st century with the targets of Vision 2020 within our grasp, we do not want the people of Sabah to be left out.

"Let us not waste any more time on the narrow sectarianism preached by

ambitious and self-seeking politicians.

"We can together transform Sabah into an economically advanced and spiritually resilient State that will make Sabahans proud of their State and respected by everyone within and outside Malaysia," he said.

Meanwhile, State Barisan

leaders said the open letter reflected the Prime Minister's concern and sincerity in wanting the people of Sabah to be part and parcel of Malaysia.

Umno information chief Karim Ghani said it was also very obvious that the Prime Minister wanted the people of Sabah to return to the mainstream of the country's development.

"I hope the rakyat of Sabah will take heed to the call made by the Prime Minister and give Barisan Nasional the mandate to lead them out of the suffocating hold of PBS leaders who are only interested in pursuing their personal well-being.

"I am sure that nine years is more than enough for the people of Sabah and surely they do not want to allow themselves to suffer for another term," he said.

Akar Wanita chief Sullah Rampas said the time had come for the people of Sabah to start looking towards new dimensions.

"The non-Muslims in Sabah should not have any hesitation in throwing their

support behind the Barisan as the coalition's leadership has nothing else in mind but to develop the State.

"The sincerity of the Prime Minister should not be taken lightly and it is only proper for the people of Sabah to respond accordingly," she added.

Liberal Democratic Party vice-president Dr Chong Eng Leong said the call by the Prime Minister was timely as the people of Sabah were on the verge of charting their future.

"Dr Mahathir as a responsible leader is reminding the people here that they should not be influenced by political rhetoric from a party which had failed to lead Sabah out of the doldrums despite having ruled the State for nine years.

"The people have to make a major decision and if their mind is clouded by the rhetoric then they will have nobody else to blame but themselves if they decide to again place their future in a party that had done nothing to improve their living standards," he said.