

Dr M: Stay united for good of all

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KOTA KINABALU, Sat. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told Barisan Nasional components in Sabah to stand united for the common good of the people, adding that the BN's unique coalition system is the best and most practical political concept for the country.

The Prime Minister and BN chairman said the concept will stay until such a time when the country is ready for a single truly multi-racial party.

It had been amply proven that the BN system ensured the interests of all communities, including the minorities, were protected, Dr Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir stressed this at two separate functions here today. The first was at the opening of the third Angkatan Rakyat Sabah (Akar) congress and the second at the Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) inaugural congress at the Sabah Foundation's auditorium.

At the Akar function, Dr Mahathir said there were those who felt that the country could be better off with a single multi-racial party than a coalition of racial-based parties.

"Perhaps one day when we have got over our suspicions and do not feel threatened or left out, then we can have a single party instead of a coalition.

"But the time has not come yet for this. We are still insecure and sceptical as to whether our voices

could be heard," he added.

Also present were Chief Minister Tan Sri Sakaran Dandai, Akar president Datuk Mark Koding, his deputy Datuk Dr Jeffrey Kitingan and leaders of the other BN component parties.

Dr Mahathir said the opportunity to stand for election was given even to candidates from communities which did not command the majority of electorates in the constituencies.

Citing the MIC as an example, he said the party was given seats to contest in areas where the Indians were the minority.

"But in the BN, MIC candidates will receive full backing from Umno and the other coalition partners and this is our strength.

"In the same way, Umno may need help from Indian voters in seats which Malay votes are split (between the BN and the Opposition). This is when MIC's support is vital.

"And that is the concept of the BN. We help each other."

At this point, the Prime Minister jested that what he was saying was not a prelude to announcing the date of the next general election.

"It is just a reminder to the people of Sabah."

He said the interests of Kadazans in Sabah, for instance, were well looked after with the appointments of Datuk Bernard Dompok as Federal Minister, Datuk Jeffrey Kitingan as Senator and deputy Federal Minister and Datuk Joseph Kurup as deputy VChief Minister.

"It is clear that in BN, everyone has a place, whether he is Muslim or non-Muslim, Bumiputera or

non-Bumiputera."

Dr Mahathir said he was happy to be in Sabah, especially since relations between Kuala Lumpur and Kota Kinabalu were getting stronger under the present State Government.

He said he was pleased to note that Akar had remained loyal to the BN despite setbacks that it suffered during the last State election.

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was not under the opposition and led by a State Government that was in confrontation with the Federal Government.

The Prime Minister said it was not the duty of Barisan Nasional to give more attention to the development in Sabah now that the national coalition is at the helm of the State Government.

Dr Mahathir said the BN government record in developing the country's economy which, among others, assured full employment to

the people was an extraordinary achievement.

"Employment and job opportunities are in abundance in Peninsular Malaysia... employers have to seek manpower from abroad," he said.

He said there might be unemployment in Sabah but if those unemployed were willing to work elsewhere outside the State, there would be ample jobs awaiting them.

On SAPP, the Prime Minister said he was happy that the party, formed by Parti Bersatu Sabah dissident

leaders, headed by Datuk Yong Teck Lee fully subscribed to the BN aspiration.

"It was Yong and other PBS dissident leaders decision to form SAPP that led to the formation of the State BN Government after the Feb 18-19 State election," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the formation of SAPP paved the way for several other PBS leaders to quit either to form new political parties or to join existing BN components.

"This is the kind of spirit that we want. We don't want people who get disillusioned when they lose and turn their backs on us.

At the SAPP congress, Dr Mahathir said poverty in Sabah has contributed to the 15 per cent level of the national population living below the poverty line.

He said that this could be reduced. "All we need to do is develop Sabah more," the

Prime Minister said.

The government was successful in reducing the level of poverty from 57 per cent before independence to 15 per cent presently. There would be no problem in lowering it further, he said.

The poverty level would not be at this level if Sabah

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