

Dr M: Sabah has confidence in BN

PETALING JAYA, Sun. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the higher majority received by the Barisan Nasional (BN) in the Sulabayan by-election yesterday was an indication of the Sabahans' greater confidence in the BN Government.

He said this could be achieved despite attempts by the Opposition to undermine the Government.

He said the Opposition had claimed that among others the Sabah Government had awarded timber concession to a company without going through the normal process.

"If this is true, we will certainly take action. We will not allow such a thing to happen," he said at the

Kuala Lumpur International Airport on his return from a two-day visit to the Philippines.

He was asked by newsmen to comment on the BN victory in Sulabayan where its candidate Nasir Tan Sri Sakaran, 37, had won the seat with a 6,013-vote majority, nearly twice of that received by his father Tan Sri Sakaran Dandai in last February's State elections.

Nasir, who polled 8,764 votes, defeated three Independent candidates, two of whom lost their deposits.

The seat fell vacant following the resignation of Sakaran who assumed the Yang di-Pertua Negeri's post.

The Prime Minister said there was no need for the

Opposition to harp on such issues as the State Government would not take such matters lightly, adding that it (Government) would take the necessary action.

"The Government is responsible and will not take things lightly," he added.

Asked whether the higher majority was due to the fact that BN was facing weak opponents, Dr Mahathir said: "If the people have no interest in the party, they will not come out (to vote) at all."

He said the low turnout of voters, 66.4 per cent, also had no effect on the BN, which could still enjoy an increased majority.

On Malaysia's offer to extend aid to the Japanese Government to help the

country face the aftermath of the Jan 17 earthquake in Osaka and Kobe, Dr Mahathir said it was awaiting a reply from Japan on the kind of aid it required.

"We obviously cannot send money but if there is anything we can give to help, we are willing to extend our assistance," he said.

Among those present to receive Dr Mahathir and Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali at the airport were Home Ministry secretary-general Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Din, Foreign Ministry's deputy secretary-general II Hasmy Agam, Chief Protocol officer Datuk Omar Din and the Philippines Ambassador Alberto Encominda and wife, Rose.