

# PM happy with situation in Sabah

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KOTA KINABALU, Tues.

The political climate for the Barisan Nasional in Sabah has improved very much with more people realising the effectiveness of the national coalition, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said there has been a change in the people's attitude since they realised that only through the BN can the State progress and the people enjoy better living standards.

Speaking at an airport Press conference at the end of his two-day visit to Sabah, he said one of the reasons for his visit to Kota Kinabalu was to assess the political climate here.

"I am very happy with the political situation. Although the BN Government has been in power for only a year, there has been tremendous improvement in the administration of the State and many programmes and projects for the benefit of the people are on-going.

"There is also close co-operation among component BN parties under the 'politics of development' concept," he said.

He said many of the problems in the State have been

highlighted by the BN component parties in Sabah and steps have been instituted to rectify them.

He said one of the main tasks of the State Government would be to improve the living standards of the people especially the poor, since the percentage of poor people in the State was above the national average.

He said the State administration under Chief Minister Datuk Salleh Tun Said was doing a good job as the new generation of State leaders were implementing new approaches and ideas to improve the economy, bring development to the State and make Sabah on par with other States.

On BN's election promise of rotating the post of Chief Minister among the Malays, Kadazan, Dusun and the Chinese, Dr Mahathir said the BN would ensure that the promise was fulfilled.

He said whoever became the Chief Minister still had to work closely with the other members of the State Cabinet.

"If the system is managed properly, it would not be a problem and can be practical," he said.

When asked about the possibility of Parti Bersatu Sabah rejoining the BN, he said to join the BN or to be a friend, one has to be sincere and honest and added that one should not abruptly

abandon the friendship when it seems suitable.

Asked to comment on Parti Demokratik Sabah president Datuk Bernard Dompok's proposal for a quota system for the distribution of senior posts at all levels of the civil service in Sabah, Dr Mahathir said the issue has to be studied since Malaysia has many races.

Asked to comment on the political climate in Kelantan, he said the people realised that Pas and Semangat 46 have made empty election promises which they could not fulfil.

He added that Pas leaders who claimed to be "Tok Guru" have also resorted to "name calling", bad-mouthing and condemning people which was very unbecoming of people who claimed to be religious teachers.

He said BN leaders, in the past, have been patient with such tactics but the time has come for such actions to be made known to the people.

He said Pas deputy Youth chief Mohamed Sabu was not fit to be a leader especially since the "Tok Guru" had in the past stressed that any unmarried couple in a closed room was committing "khalwat".

Yet the same "Tok Guru" is defending Mohamed Sabu while religious officers in the State are going

around arresting unmarried couples for holding hands in public," he said.

On the DAP, he said the party had run out of issues and was currently trying to fan racial sentiments to woo voters, especially the Chinese although the Chinese in Malaysia enjoyed many benefits through the efforts of BN component parties.

"The DAP is not being very responsible and it does not seem to care that their similar action in 1969 had caused racial unrest," he added.

On the Indian Progressive Front's decision to leave Gagasan Rakyat and its recent gathering to show its support for the Barisan Nasional, Dr Mahathir said he was happy with the party members' support.

He added that it was important that they show similar support at the polling booths during the general election before a decision could be made on its application to join the BN.

Among those present at the airport to bid farewell to Dr Mahathir and Datin Seri Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali were Salleh, Dompok, Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Joseph Kurup, Datuk Yong Teck Lee and Datuk Ghazali Salleh, Agriculture and Fisheries Minister Datuk Lajim Okin and assistant ministers.