

Dr Mahathir: **Umno** will not **force** itself into Sarawak

KUCHING: Umno will leave it to Sarawak Barisan Nasional to decide if the party should spread its wings to the state.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Umno was interested in establishing itself in Sarawak provided that the party had the support of the state coalition.

"Umno wants to come to Sarawak but not at the expense of any party (in the coalition). We want to cooperate (with other parties) so as not to jeopardise the status of bumiputera in Sarawak," he added when opening Parti P e s a k a Bumiputera Bersatu's (PBB) triennial general assembly at Santubong Resort near here yesterday.

PBB is the backbone of

the four-member state Barisan coalition. Others are Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), Sarawak National Party (SNAP) and Parti Bansa Davak Sarawak (PBDS).

Sarawak is the only state which is not represented by Umno.

Later when speaking to reporters, he said Umno would not force itself into the state.

"It will depend on the wishes of the people. If they are ready to accept us, we will come."

Dr Mahathir said Umno had been working closely with PBB as both parties had similar goals in its political struggles.

The Prime Minister cut short his two-day visit to Sarawak and returned to Kuala Lumpur at noon.