

29/08/1998

Reasons why Umno is keen to go into Sarawak

KUCHING, Fri. - Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Umno was keen to enter Sarawak and hoped its request would not be rejected by any party.

In doing so Umno was not trying to "colonise" Sarawak, or want to cause any split among the parties in the State, the Prime Minister said.

"We only want to forge closer relationship between the Bumiputeras in Sarawak and the Peninsula.

"We need strength to administer a developing country. Without strength it is not possible for us to administer Malaysia," Dr Mahathir said when opening the Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu convention in Santubong, 40km from here.

He said Umno did not want its entry to Sarawak to adversely affect unity and the Bumiputera's political power in the State.

There are now four BN parties in Sarawak. They are the PBB under the presidency of Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud, Parti Kebangsaan Sarawak under Datuk Amar James Wong, Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sarawak under Datuk Dr George Chan Hong Nam, and Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak under Datuk Leo Moggie.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Barisan Nasional chairman, said unity would only be meaningful if there was no friction among the parties which decided to work together.

He said there were similarities in the struggles of Umno and those of the PBB, without which it would not be possible for the two parties to co-operate.

"It is because of this similarities that we (Umno) want to be close to PBB. We hope our request is not turned down by any party."

However, Umno would leave it to the people of Sarawak to decide, he said.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived here yesterday for a two-day visit to Sarawak, said that Umno's philosophy from the beginning was to maintain close relationship with other parties.

The Prime Minister spent some time to relate to the audience the BN's politics of sharing power among the components to bring prosperity and stability to the country.

Later, speaking at a Press conference, Dr Mahathir said the Government would maintain its earlier decision to revive the Bakun hydro power dam project, but on a smaller scale.

He said that the Government was looking into ways to complete the project which might involve the installation of fewer turbines.

Dr Mahathir said that the Government had not set a time-frame for the completion of the project as it would have to find a partner to continue with the project.

(END)