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Mahathir-Sarawak

UMNO WILL GO TO SARAWAK ONLY IF ACCEPTED, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUCHING, Aug 28 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Umno will only spread its wings to Sarawak if its people are prepared to accept the party.

Umno did not want to be regarded as "encroaching" and had no intention to go to Sarawak and start fighting with the other Barisan Nasional components, he told a news conference after opening the Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu convention in Santubong, near here.

He said although there was a good partnership between Umno and PBB, the entry of Umno to Sarawak still depended on the wishes of the majority of people in the state,

"We must remember that PBB is an amalgamation between Pesaka (the Dayak wing) and Bumiputera (the Malay wing). The idea of working together is not something new and it is the basis of the PBB's existence in the first place," he said.

Asked if it looked strange that Umno had branches in all the states except Sarawak, he said it did not work that way.

"Strange or not, we work according to the need. We do not have an indoctrination approach, that we must be here. That is not the way Umno functions," he said.

Asked by reporters later, whether Umno would need the consensus of the other Barisan Nasional (BN) parties for its entry into Sarawak, he said it was not necessary because other BN parties normally would not interfere with what Umno did.

He said the BN concept of cooperation was used as a model by other countries in their administration.

"Some people ask me how the BN, which has 14 components, has succeeded in administering Malaysia when other countries with only two ethnic groups are always fighting among themselves," he said.

He said the BN practised moderation and had no ambition to suppress anyone.

For example, he said, although Umno was the backbone of the BN, it did not grab more than 50 per cent of the seats to contest in the general election except when it entered Sabah where it had slightly more than half of the seats.

Although Umno won all the seats, it could not rule on its own, he said.

"The BN's concept is that it's better to have 50 per cent of the 100 per cent than to have 100 per cent of nothing," he added.

He said Malaysia, as a developing nation, must have a strong government to implement development projects for the wellbeing of the people.

"Maybe highly developed countries could afford not to have a strong government, they make sure that the government is totally neutralised. We see that in governments of the developed nations," he said.

Reiterating that the people must remain united, he said there were still many opportunities to foster ties while at the same time retaining their respective identities although this might sound like a contradiction in terms.

He also urged Malaysians to remember the contributions of past leaders in promoting unity in the country.

-- BERNAMA

OPP JK