

'Running for office tougher than running up mountains'

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RANAU: Running for public office is more difficult than running up mountains, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"This is because firstly, I have to contest in elections and get appointed Prime Minister," he said yesterday in a 10-minute speech before launching the 15th World Mountain Running Trophy race in Kinabalu Park.

In a way, Dr Mahathir said he had been doing a lot of running since he contested in the 1964 general elections.

"I have been running with the opposition chasing me from behind. From a political angle, I can see how tough it is to run up mountains," he said.

Dr Mahathir, in jest, said he could not understand 'why the participants were running up

Mount Kinabalu as he found it difficult climbing even the stairs of his home.

"But you see, even people who climb stairs in their house can also win a gold medal," quipped Dr Mahathir, who received the first gold medal in the competition from World Mountain Running Association president Danny Hughes.

Dr Mahathir also said he had never been to the top of Mount Kinabalu.

"But if ever I go up there you can rest assured I will be using a helicopter," he said.

Dr Mahathir also told the participants that he expected them to fall in love with Sabah as it was a colourful and beautiful state.

"And the girls are pretty. I would expect some of you will

settle in Sabah," he added.

"That is a common phenomenon with Malaysians coming here and ending up marrying Sabahans."

Dr Mahathir said it was good for narrowing the gap among the people of the peninsula, Sabah and Sarawak.

"In the case of foreigners, it is good for foreign relations.

"So do have a 'foreign affair' while you are here."

Later, Dr Mahathir launched the inaugural World Kinabalu Invitational Hang-Gliding Challenge at the Mount Kinabalu Golf Club.

He said this was the first time Malaysia was organising such an event and he hoped it would interest Malaysians to take up the sport.