

23 NOV 1999

Mahathir-Kadazandusun

DR M: IT'S TIME FOR KADAZANDUSUNS TO PLAY BIGGER ROLE IN GOVT

PAPAR, Nov 23 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the time has come for the Kadazandusun community in Sabah to play a bigger role in the country's administration along with the other races.

The Prime Minister said Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) could no longer be depended on to represent them as the opposition party had merely been using racial sentiments all these while for the personal interests of their leaders.

"I urge Kadazandusuns to support and vote for their leaders in Barisan Nasional (BN) in next Monday's general election to protect their interests," he said when speaking at the ground-breaking ceremony for the General Operations Forces's 16th Batallion headquarters building in Kinarut, near here.

He said Kadazandusuns and non-Muslim Bumiputeras in Sabah could not play an effective role in nation-building as they had been alienated all these while by PBS leaders, he said.

The community's needs would be better taken care of if they backed Kadazandusun leaders in the ruling BN, he said.

"It's not that we don't want to cooperate with PBS but we've learnt our lesson. The party was once a BN component but in the 1990 general election, it suddenly pulled out from the coalition without informing me as BN chairman.

"I believe this is not the attitude of the Kadazandusun community ...it's only the attitude of PBS leaders," said Dr Mahathir, who is also BN chairman.

As a result of the pull-out, many Kadazandusun leaders who lost confidence in PBS decided to form their own political parties and later joined BN, he said.

"I feel Kadazandusuns should leave PBS and join BN component parties headed by leaders like Tan Sri Bernard Dompok and Tan Sri Joseph Kurup," he said.

Dompok heads United Pasok Momogun Kadazandusun Organisation (Upko) while Kurup is president of Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS).

Dompok and Kurup are BN candidates in this election, contesting in the Kinabalu and Keningau parliamentary constituencies, respectively.

Dr Mahathir said the BN treated all communities equally by providing them the same opportunities to those capable of improving themselves.

"There are countries which do not allow certain races to join the armed forces thinking that they will act violently and later revolt. But in Malaysia, we do not alienate anyone," he said.

Dr Mahathir thanked the police and security forces for their professionalism in discharging their daily duties.

He, however, regretted the actions of demonstrators and street rioters who tested policemen's patience when they tried to disperse them.

He was referring to former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's supporters who took to the streets in the federal capital following Anwar's sacking from the government and Umno in September last year.

"This proves they're not thankful to policemen who not only have to safeguard the country's security but also protect the rioters' safety," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he was confident the people would reject the

instigators of the demonstrations and street rioting.

The RM140-million General Operations Force's headquarters building opened by Dr Mahathir today is equipped with various facilities including 600 residential units for policemen.

Present were Chief Minister Datuk Osu Sukam, Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob and Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai.

Dr Mahathir later visited the Lok Kawi army camp which houses the fifth brigade.

Addressing some 1,000 army personnel at the camp, Dr Mahathir said he was grateful the economic downturn did not pose security threat to the country.

He said the police and army maintained national security by performing their duties with discipline and high professionalism.

He said the government could devote its time and efforts to revive the depressed economy as the police and armed forces were efficient in preserving rule and order.

"As long as there is understanding and cooperation among the government, armed forces and the people, the country will continue to enjoy peace and harmony.

"It will be difficult for foreigners to re-colonise this country," he added.

-- BERNAMA

JS TS