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Sabah-Muruts

MURUTS ENDEARED TO DR MAHATHIR

By: Nizam Yatim

KEMABONG, March 11 (Bernama) -- The Muruts, the third biggest ethnic group in Sabah, have endeared themselves to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad because the prime minister always mentions the community in his speeches.

Dr Mahathir's respect for the Muruts has created an awareness among the community that they were not ignored by government leaders, said Assistant Communications and Works Minister Datuk Rubin Balang.

" This is totally different during the opposition days in Sabah as the leaders will never mention the community's name in their speeches," said Rubin, the BN candidate for Kemabong.

According to last year's statistics, there are some 81,000 Muruts in Sabah, majority of whom were in Bingkor, Pensiangan, Melalap and Kemabong.

Dr Mahathir's concern for the Muruts is also shared by his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who personally chosed Kemabong as among the constituencies for his election campaign, said Rubin.

Muruts constitute about 70 per cent of the 11,400 electorate in Kemabong which is located some 200km south of Kota Kinabalu.

When Abdullah was in Kemabong last Sunday, he held a two-hour meeting with the Muruts at the Kemabong community hall seeking their support for the Barisan Nasional (BN), saying the ruling coalition had never neglected the welfare of Sabahans living in the interior of the state.

Abdullah stressed that the Muruts must support leaders from their own stock such as Rubin, former assemblyman for Nabawan (now renamed as Pensiangan) Datuk Adib Sigoh and Datuk Kadoh Agundong, who is defending Melalap (previously known as Tenom) as they were sincere in pursuing the community's cause.

Rubin is among the first three assemblymen to dump the opposition Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) in 1994 to join Umno while Adib too ditched the Kadazandusun-based party to become deputy president of Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS), one of the nine BN components in the state.

Kadoh earned the nickname "giant killer" when he ousted the then Chief Minister Datuk Harris Salleh in Tenom in the 1985 state election.

Harris was the Sabah Chief Minister from 1976 to 1985 under the Berjaya government

The emergence of Rubin, Adib and Kadoh has filled the vacuum in the leadership of Muruts after their charismatic leader G.S. Sundang, the founder of Pasok Momogun, the first Murut-based party in the 1960s.

-- BERNAMA

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