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PM: It's a mandate for continued development

gkasan; Joniston Bangkuai, Jaswinder Kaur; Abdul Razak Ahmad
KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight the mandate given to the Barisan Nasional to form the next State Government in Sabah was proof that the people had voted for continued development and security.

Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman and Umno president, said the coalition's victory meant a lot.

"There is a growing trend that the BN is being accepted by more and more people in Kadazandusun areas. If previously, we could only form the Government after opposition members left their parties to join BN, now we have won on our own accord," he told a Press conference in Seri Perdana.

Joining him via teleconferencing at the Press conference was his deputy, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who was in Kota Kinabalu.

Although the BN lost in several areas where the Kadazandusun community formed the majority, Parti Bersatu Sabah had won with a smaller majority. "I see a changing perception among the Kadazandusun community," Dr Mahathir said.

He thanked the people for their support, saying that the BN would do its utmost to ensure that all the election promises were carried out.

Dr Mahathir expressed regret that Chief Minister Tan Sri Bernard Dompok had lost in Moyog, saying the BN wanted him to continue to be Chief Minister if he had won.

He said this was the reason why he (Dr Mahathir) had campaigned in Penampang several times.

"But it seems that the people of Penampang do not want a Kadazan to be their CM," he said.

When asked who would be the next Kadazandusun Chief Minister in Sabah, Dr Mahathir said: "We will have to study it very carefully, taking into consideration the results and the support given to Dompok and all the other BN candidates."

Dr Mahathir said the rotation system would remain. Under the system, the Chief Ministership is rotated for a two-year period between Muslim Bumiputeras, non-Muslim Bumiputeras and Chinese.

Dr Mahathir was also asked if Dompok would be appointed as a State Assemblyman to enable him to complete his term as Chief Minister.

"Well, he has said that he wants to retire from politics. So, all these statements made during election (campaign) must be carefully considered before a decision is made because it is a serious decision.

"We want to maintain our credibility."

On the future of Dompok's Parti Demokratik Sabah, he said the party still had a role in the State although it had taken a severe beating in the election.

Dr Mahathir said the BN would not accept PBS Assemblymen if they wanted to join the coalition.

Asked whether the victory in Sabah could be considered as an endorsement of his leadership and support of the Government's measures to overcome the economic problems, Dr Mahathir said this was for others to judge.

However, he said, to some extent the results showed that the business community, most affected by the economic problems, had supported the Government.

Dr Mahathir said he was pleased that the BN had won 31 seats, one short of a two-thirds majority, as the projection earlier was only 26 to 27

seats.

He said many people had in the past told him that the BN would lose in Sabah.

He said they did not take into account the views of the grassroots, but instead relied on the opinions of the so-called elite.

"When I went there, I realised that the BN had good grassroots support," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the BN would continue to bring development to Sabah.

"In the past when Sabah was ruled by a non-Barisan party, there was no development.

"In fact, the people did not have water and electricity. But the BN managed to change that for the better," he said.

Abdullah also congratulated the Sabah BN and thanked the voters for their support.