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BN leaders welcome Umno's move to unite

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Sabahan Chinese in party will minimise race politics, says Yong

KOTA KINABALU, Sun: Umno's move to accept Sabahan Chinese as members sets a firm direction towards national unity, the president of the state Chinese-based party Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP), **Datuk Yong Teck Lee**, said today.

The move would not affect Chinese-based component parties of Barisan Nasional (BN) but would instead would make the coalition stronger.

Referring to it as a positive start, Yong, a former Sabah chief minister, said it may take 10 or 20 years for total unification "but at least for now the direction has been set".

"A similar step was made when Umno first entered Sabah which admitted non-Muslim bumiputras as members," he said.

He was commenting on Prime Minister and Umno president **Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's** announcement that the Chinese

in Sabah can join Umno.

Sabah Umno chief **Datuk Seri Panglima Osu Sukam** said the leadership has made the right decision.

He said there was a time when Mahathir remarked it cannot be ruled out that Umno will be a multi-racial party sometime in the future.

"Today's announcement has brought the party one step closer towards it," he said.

In **PENANG**, Gerakan secretary-general **Chia Kwang Chye** described as "significant" Umno's move which is expected to be well received by all Malaysians, as a positive political development in the country.

The move demonstrates the evolution of the most dominant political party in multi-racial Malaysia towards opening its doors to all its citizens, he said.

He added: "This augurs well for the other multi-racial parties which are already

accepting all Malaysians.

"Umno, being the main component party will lead the way for other mono-racial political parties to open their doors to all Malaysians. If more mono-racial parties open their doors to Malaysian citizens to join, then we have more chances of achieving Vision 2020."

Gerakan youth chief **Teng Chang Yeow** said Umno is opening its doors as it is moving towards Mahathir's quest to build a Malaysian race.

"This is perhaps Umno's internal matter but it will have a strong impact on the creation of the Malaysian race and non-racial politics in Malaysia," he said.

In **KLANG**, MCA president **Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik** said the party is happy with the announcement as it is a step in the right direction.

He said MCA is already there in Sabah and Chinese

there can join the party, Sabah Progressive Party (SPP) or Umno "as long as these people join Barisan Nasional".

In **JOHOR BARU**, MIC president **Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu** said MIC has no objection to the move and if the prime minister wants to take the whole Indian community into Umno, "we are prepared to do it".

He said he could call for a special conference to tell the Indian community that they will have to join Umno if the opportunity is given to them.

In **PETALING JAYA**, DAP secretary-general **Kerk Kim Hock** said such action will definitely upset the existing working relationship among the BN family, especially in the peninsula.

Describing the move as strange and unique, he said politics in Sabah entails different approaches "but DAP looks at it as Umno's and BN's internal matter".