

PM: Umno won't stab partners in the back

STAR 31 JUL 2001

KOTA KINABALU: Umno will not stab its Barisan Nasional partners in Sarawak and Sabah in the back, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said Umno was committed to Barisan and would ensure that candidates of its coalition party win elections irrespective of the party they represented.

"Umno does not stab its partners in the back. Even if we have any sympathy for any group we will always stand up for Barisan," he said when asked about certain independents claiming that they had the blessings of Umno to contest against Barisan candidates in the coming Sarawak elections.

The Umno president explained that during the Likas by-election, the party gave full support to Barisan candidate Datuk Yong Teck Lee of the Sabah Progressive Party who retained the Muslim majority seat with a larger majority of 7,541 votes as compared to 4,962 in 1999.

"The person who wins is not really important but the victory of Barisan is more important," said the Barisan chairman who was on a one-day trip to Sabah to open the seventh Parti Upko congress and join a Sabah Barisan celebration and thanksgiving with the Likas people.

Dr Mahathir said Yong's victory was proof that Barisan's win in the 1999 state elections was not because of phantom voters.

On Barisan's victory in the Kadazandusun areas of Likas which were traditionally strongholds of opposition Parti Bersatu Sabah, he said the Kadazandusuns have changed their attitude towards Barisan.

"In the past they felt that the government of Sabah was dominated by the Malay Muslims but now we have given due consideration to the community and they are ready to accept the concept of working together," he said.