

Upko calls for unity at congress

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Sabah party believes worst is over

By Roy Goh

KOTA KINABALU, Wed: Rejected and belittled in the last State election, Upko, the biggest Kadazandusun-based component party of the Barisan Nasional, believes the worst is over.

Upko or United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun and Murut Organisation, has struggled hard for recognition from the community it represents and even within the BN fold where expectations are high.

Its president, Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, during the party's 7th congress launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr

Mahathir Mohamad on Monday here, said the party is ready to work with the BN to achieve its Vision 2020 aspiration.

The party has gone through trials and tribulations the last seven years, he said but "today we stand with our heads high and secure in the knowledge that things can only get better".

Themed "Misompuru Tokou Wagu" (Let's unite again), the three-day congress calls for Kadazandusun and Murut leaders to reconcile and strive as a single voice in their political struggle, he said.

Despite being a minority party, Upko has Dompok in the Federal cabinet as Minister in the Prime Minister's Depart-

ment and Upko secretary Datuk Wences Angang as the Deputy Chief Minister cum Infrastructure Development Minister in the State.

It also has one assistant minister in the State cabinet, two Members of Parliament and a Senator.

Two years ago, when Upko, then known as Parti Demokratik Sabah, contested in the State election, it was trounced in the non-Muslim Bumiputra majority seats.

Of the 12 seats the party contested, it won two.

However, the party went on to win three of the four seats allocated to it in the parliamentary election eight months later.