

People reject rough tactics, says Mahathir

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Taib's leadership well accepted

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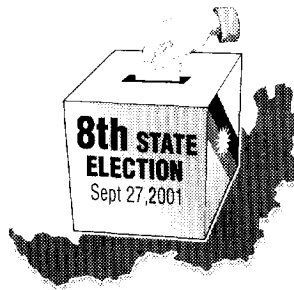
KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Sarawak election results show that the people of the state reject the rough tactics employed by the Opposition.

In congratulating the state Barisan Nasional and Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud for the victory, he said the decision of the voters showed that this sort of tactics will not be accepted.

"I am happy that the voters have rejected the Opposition's rough," he told reporters after opening the 89th World Dental Congress at the Putra Stadium tonight.

Mahathir, who was beaming during the interview, said the performance of the state Barisan Nasional component parties this time around was far better than that in the 1996 election.

This could be seen from the results which saw BN winning 60 seats with only one seat each going to the DAP and an independent candidate.



The BN held 58 seats, DAP one and Independents three when the Sarawak State Assembly was dissolved.

Mahathir went on to say that the leadership of Abdul Taib is well received and accepted by the people in the state despite negative allegations being hurled against the chief minister.

He praised Taib saying that under his leadership the state has seen rapid development.

"I believe the trust that people of the state have placed in the BN has seen the benefits," he said, adding that the people would not reject the BN without any basis.

On disunity between the Malay and Melanau communities in the state, Mahathir said this was probably created by cer-

tain quarters.

The Melanau community call themselves Melanau Malays, with many of them Muslims who share a similar culture with the Malay community.

The prime minister said he expects voters to be more mature in the next general election, due in 2004.

In the 1999 general election, the voters did not like the BN and were even opposed to him as they felt betrayed, he added.

"Now, they realise that it is not true ... I was only saving them from a leader who was not suitable. We want a leader who is good and of high morals."

Mahathir said that even if he was unpopular, it was his duty to protect the people and the country. "In the end, truth will be known by the people."

He also advised the elected state assemblymen to uphold the promises they made to the voters during campaigning.

"Uphold the promises that you made during the election. Do not break it because, if you do, this will betray the trust of people which will in turn affect the political party and the government."