

# PM: Sarawak BN ready for state elections

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KUCHING: The Sarawak Barisan Nasional is ready for the state elections, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

Dr Mahathir, who ended a two-day working visit to the state, said although he did not get a proper briefing from the state coalition, he had private sessions with state leaders.

"They are ready. They understand the problems and the attitude of the people," he said before departing for Kuala Lumpur.

"But don't hold the elections just for the fun of it. It is a serious thing because we want to form the government," he added.

The last Sarawak polls were held in September 1996.

Politicians have been speculating for some time now that the polls would be called between April and June.

Queried about claims by certain quarters in Sarawak that Umno was backing them, Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said: "I like to tell the Sarawak people that Umno is not here.

"Anybody who claim they are Umno, they are not Umno. I am advising the people of Sarawak that they must not be misled (into believing) that Umno is coming (to Sarawak)."

Asked to comment on former defence minister Datuk Abang Abu Bakar Mustapha's recent announcement that he would challenge Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud in Asajaya in the elections, Dr Mahathir replied:

"Challenge lah."

On Friday night, during a dinner in Petrajaya, Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the people of Sarawak had a good government and they should keep and continue to support it.

"It is all right for people to get tired of me but not your government in Sarawak because it is doing a good job," the Prime Minister said at a dinner.

State and federal leaders as well as community chiefs attended the gathering.

"There are some people who say that any change is good. I can tell you some changes are very bad.

"If there is no necessity for the change, why change?"

"You have a good government, keep it and support it," he said.