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Umno-Chinese

CHONG MING IS SABAH UMNO'S EARLY-BIRD CHINESE MEMBER

KOTA KINABALU, May 21 (Bernama) -- Tan Chong Ming is one person who is understandably oblivious to the excitement generated by yesterday's announcement by the Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that Umno is relaxing its rules to let the Chinese in Sabah to join it.

This is because, Tan, 47, is already a card-carrying Umno member soon after the virtually Malay-based party from Peninsular Malaysia spread its wings to Sabah a decade ago.

Tan told Bernama today that he was a founding member of the Kimanis Umno division which has since been renamed Beaufort division.

Reflecting on his embrace of Umno, Tan said: "I applied to join the party because I was fascinated by its ideals and political culture.

"I was accepted and till today I am still an Umno member."

His membership number is 0009363, said the self-employed who was born in Kuala Penyu and a delegate to the Beaufort Umno divisional meeting last month.

Umno spread its wings to Sabah in February 1991 several months after Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS), which led the ruling Barisan Nasional in the state then, chose to leave the coalition.

The Umno leadership decided then that all Bumiputera in Sabah, regardless of their ethnic and religious backgrounds, could join the party.

Asked how his other Umno colleagues treated him, Tan said: "They accept me well and I have no problem mixing with them and in turn I could also play my part for the party."

Dr Mahathir's announcement allowing the Chinese in Sabah to join Umno followed the dissolution of Parti Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat (Akar) yesterday and the acceptance of Akar members, including the Chinese, into Umno.

Tan said as a founding Chinese member of Umno in Sabah, he not only welcomed the prime minister's announcement but also urged the Chinese in the state to make the most of Umno's openness to consolidate inter-racial unity.

-- BERNAMA

JS RYN