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Decision to guard interests of party members

KOTA KINABALU, Sun. - Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat (Akar) president Datuk Pandikar Amin Mulia said the decision to disband the party was to protect the interest of its members and to answer the call of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to unite.

He said his decision was supported by members of the party's supreme council at an emergency meeting yesterday after considering the future of the party.

Speaking at a gathering to announce the dissolution of the party, Pandikar, who is Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, said Akar had faced many hurdles since it was formed 12 years ago, but recent developments in State politics did not augur well for the party.

Making an indirect reference to the rotation system of the Sabah Chief Ministership, he portrayed himself as the captain and Akar the ship, which had been tossed and turned by changes in "wind" directions every two years since 1994.

"We do not know where the wind would blow next and before Akar sinks to the bottom of the ocean, it is better we move our precious cargo to a larger and safer ship (Umno) that is equipped with modern equipment and has an experienced and skilled captain," said Pandikar.

With "cargo", he meant the 30,000 members from three main communities - the Muslim Bumiputera, non-Muslim Bumiputera and the non-Bumiputera - who made up the party.

Pandikar said the decision of Akar members to join Umno en masse was unconditional and they had chosen the party because it was the backbone of the Barisan Nasional Government and Umno would always be relevant, despite changes in the leadership.

However, he said, Akar would not stop its members from joining other component parties in the State.

Pandikar said the Prime Minister's call to unite was clearly seen in his efforts to hold talks with Pas to discuss the deterioration of Malay unity in the country.

"Therefore, Akar has decided to rise to this challenge with sincerity through the dissolution of the party and by applying to join Umno to strengthen unity," he said.

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