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Dr M: Back polls winners

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KOTA KINABALU, Sun. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has reminded candidates who lose in the coming Umno branch and divisional elections to support those who are elected.

The reminder was among the advice he gave during a closed-door meeting with Umno branch leaders from the Gaya and Tanjung Aru divisions at the Kuwasa Complex, here, today.

Speaking at a Press conference after the meeting, he said there were no specific questions raised at the meeting about the party's branch and divisional elections.

"But I mentioned to them that if there is a contest it was important for the losers to support the winners," said Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president.

Also present were Chief Minister Datuk Osu Sukam, Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaacob and Sabah Umno deputy chief Datuk Salleh Tun Said.

The meeting was attended by 600 Umno branch leaders led by Gaya Umno division head Datuk Uzair Yahya and Tanjung Umno division head Datuk Yahya Lampong.

Dr Mahathir said he took the opportunity to enlighten those present about Umno's struggle and its way of achieving success.

The Prime Minister said he also explained about the need for Umno to cooperate with other political parties and to support candidates chosen from other parties (in an election).

He said except for problems pertaining to development and squatters, there were no other significant issues raised at the meeting.

"I will discuss with Osu about the problem and to find a solution," Dr Mahathir said.

After the meeting, Dr Mahathir and Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali attended a dinner with Sabah Umno leaders and members at the Magellan Hotel here.

Dr Mahathir later held a closed-door meeting with the Sabah Umno liaison committee and Assemblymen and MPs from the party.

Tomorrow, the Prime Minister will open the 36th South East Asia Ministers of Education Conference here.

He will meet with branch leaders from the Sipitang and Beaufort divisions before returning to Kuala Lumpur in the afternoon.

Meanwhile, about 18,000 people in the State have signed a petition initiated by Kumpulan Belia Pencinta Nusa (Cintanusa) demanding that the rotation system for the Chief Minister's post be abolished.

The group wants to collect more than 150,000 signatures by the end of March before submitting the petition to Dr Mahathir.

The petition, initiated on Thursday, is a follow-up to a memorandum drawn up by the group after a six-month study on the rotation system.

The Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Sakaran Dandai was presented with a copy of the memorandum by the group on Thursday.

The rotation system was introduced by Barisan Nasional in 1994 to enable the leaders of Sabah's three main communities - the Muslim Bumiputera, the Chinese and the non-Muslim Bumiputera - to head the State Government for a term of two years.

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