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Dr M: It only applies to those from Akar

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Sabah Umno will only accept former Parti Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat members of Chinese origin into its fold and not all Chinese from Sabah.

Party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad clarified today that only the Chinese who were Akar members before the party was dissolved yesterday would be accepted into Umno.

"This is only confined to former Akar members and not all Chinese as understood earlier. I'm sorry for my statement yesterday that Umno welcomed all Sabah Chinese. What I actually meant was former Akar members only," Dr Mahathir told a Press conference after chairing the party's supreme council meeting today.

He said that Umno was prepared to accept all former Akar members of Chinese origin.

"The majority of the Chinese Akar members are from the Sino group who have been recognised as Bumiputera, resulting from mixed marriages and so on, ... this group forms the majority of former Akar members (of Chinese origin), at the same time there are also a small number of non-Bumiputera Chinese (former Akar members) whom we have also decided to accept by virtue of them being Akar members," he said.

He said there was overwhelming request from former Akar members to join Umno to continue their political struggle in Sabah.

Yesterday, after announcing the dissolution of Akar in Kota Kinabalu, Dr Mahathir announced that as a result of overwhelming request from Akar members, Umno has decided to accept even those of Chinese origin into its fold.

Dr Mahathir also confirmed the appointments of two Chinese as his political and Press secretaries.

Without naming them, the Prime Minister said the decision was made as he needed to better understand the thinking of the Chinese community.

"There have been a lot of arguments (aired by the Chinese) lately and maybe I would be able to understand them better," he said when asked why it was only now that he had decided to appoint Chinese aides.

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