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Mahathir-Minorities

SABAH MINORITY GROUPS NOT MARGINALISED, SAYS DR M

KOTA KINABALU, July 30 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has assured Barisan Nasional component parties representing minority ethnic groups in Sabah that they have never been and will not be marginalised.

Such BN component parties enjoyed equal treatment and their leaders were given opportunity to hold positions in state as well as the federal governments, he said.

In fact, all BN component parties have equal representation in the Barisan Nasional Supreme Council, said Dr Mahathir who is also chairman of the 13-party coalition.

" This is to ensure that the voice of all ethnic communities no matter how small they are, is heard during party discussions," Dr Mahathir said when opening the seventh congress of the United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation (UPKO) here today.

He said the government was mindful of the influence and significance of such parties in fighting for the cause of the minority ethnic groups.

However, he reminded all BN component parties that the government would not be in a position to accede to all their demands.

" A party very pleased with the government means that it has been treated overly well so much so that other parties do not get the treatment they deserved," said Dr Mahathir.

He said the government did not wish to see only one party gaining all the special treatment for the community it represented at the expense of raising suspicion among the other communities.

Speaking to reporters later, the prime minister said the government would pay more attention to the needs of rural-based minority groups within the Bumiputera category.

" The government will pay attention to the minority community as it is only fair that we give fair treatment especially to those living in rural areas," said Dr Mahathir.

In addition, the government would also pay greater attention to the level of progress of the smaller sub-groups of the Bumiputera people, he said.

There would be no specific allocations for the minority groups as these came under various government allocations for the Bumiputera.

" They (minority groups) still come under Bumiputera but we will give more attention now than before. We used to think about Bumiputera without thinking too much about the division in the subgroups," Dr Mahathir added.

-- BERNAMA

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