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Akar-Dissolve

SABAH BN COMPONENT, AKAR, DISSOLVED, MEMBERS TO JOIN UMNO

KOTA KINABALU, May 20 (Bernama) -- Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat (Akar), a component party of the Sabah Barisan Nasional, was officially dissolved today after being around for 12 years.

This was announced by Prime Minister and BN Chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at a special assembly of the party here.

Soon after the assembly, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Pandikar Amin Mulia, who has been Akar President, handed over Umno membership application forms from himself and others in the party to Dr Mahathir.

The Prime Minister who announced the party's dissolution at the end of his speech, said, "In the hope that the dissolution of Akar will make Umno stronger and able to contribute to the Barisan Nasional in Sabah, I am saddened and moved to preside at Akar's dissolution in Sabah."

Dr Mahathir then pressed a button and the screen opened with the words: "I, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in my capacity as BN Chairman and Umno President declare the dissolution of Akar and announce the entry of Akar members into Umno."

As a sign of Umno's acceptance of Akar members, Dr Mahathir pinned Umno's badge on Pandikar's baju.

Pandikar appeared very much moved when his party's life and times was traced through a poem.

Dr Mahathir urged Sabah Umno to accept Akar members into its fold and accord them equal treatment.

"When we join a party, we have the same rights. I urge Umno to accept them with an open hand and consider them Umno members and not as ex-Akar Umno members. The question of Akar does not arise anymore."

"Sometimes we find that Umno people are uneasy when members of other parties join them like when Semangat 46 was dissolved and its members joined Umno. They consider ex S46 members as former enemies," he said.

Umno was willing to accept anyone so long as the person subscribed to the party's struggle even if the person was among those who had left the party or supported those who had abandoned the party.

He was happy to learn that Sabah Umno was ready to accept the former Akar members into its fold.

Dr Mahathir said that he had earlier discussed the future of Akar with Pandikar and it was clear that he was sad over dissolving Akar but for the good its members he was willing to make the decision.

On the position of Akar members who were not Bumiputeras, Dr Mahathir said, "I understand that there are many Akar members who are Chinese and have been told they are willing to join Sabah Umno."

"Umno is for the Malays but because it is important that we expand in Sabah, we have accepted non-Muslim Bumiputeras as party members and now we will accept Chinese also into Umno," Dr Mahathir said.

"Even though the majority of Umno members are Malays and Muslims, but we are giving a place to non-Bumiputeras," Dr Mahathir said.

He said this was not something unusual for in the peninsula, Umno had also accepted Thais as members.

Ex-Akar members could also join other component parties of the BN, he added.

Speaking at a news conference later, Dr Mahathir said the acceptance of Chinese into Umno was only in Sabah.

He said Sabah Umno had been given an exemption and was allowed to accept members from the Chinese community and there was no need to amend the party constitution for the purpose.

With the dissolution of Akar, the BN now has 13 component parties -- Umno, MCA, MIC, Gerakan and the PPP in the peninsula.

Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS), United Pasok Momogun Kadazandusun Organisation (UPKO), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) in Sabah.

Sarawak National Party (SNAP), Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS) and Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Sarawak (PBB) in Sarawak,

-- BERNAMA

JS AAM