

# Sarawak can be ahead of others, says Mahathir

KUCHING: Sarawak will be the first state to achieve developed state status, 10 years ahead of Vision 2020, if the people worked hard, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"I believe that by 2010, if the people in Sarawak work hard, the state will be the first developed state in Malaysia," said the Prime Minister at a community dinner to mark his visit here on Monday night.

Dr Mahathir, who was presented with a huge cake in appreciation of his leadership, thanked various leaders in the state for their praises and kind words for him.

He commended Sarawakians on their unity and their strong support for the Barisan Nasional government and expressed the hope that Sarawak would continue to be Barisan's backbone.

In the 1999 general election, Sarawak Barisan won all 28

parliamentary seats it contested and in last year's state elections, won 60 seats out of the 62 it contested.

Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) president and Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud said the youths here should emulate the good qualities of Dr Mahathir.

Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) president and Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Amar Dr George Chan Hong Nam said they now realised that if they did not believe in Dr Mahathir's wisdom during the Asian financial crisis, the country would not be able to overcome the crisis.

"It is a fact that a leader like Dr Mahathir is rare. Malaysia is going to miss his leadership when he retires," he said.

Dr Mahathir, accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, was here to open the 10th PBB Convention.