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Mahathir-Kadazandusun (News Focus)

DR MAHATHIR GIVES POLITICAL PARTING GIFT TO KADAZANDUSUN COMMUNITY

By: Newmond Tibin

KOTA KINABALU, Sept 9 (Bernama) -- In what is seen as a political parting gift to the Kadazandusun community in Sabah, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has given words of hope for the three Kadazandusun-led political parties -- Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS), United Pasok Momogon Kadazandusun Murut Organisation (UPKO) and Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) to cherish albeit on different tones.

Dr Mahathir, who is set to retire from office at the end of next month, deftly displayed his political mastery each time the veteran leader was invited to launch the opening of the three Barisan Nasional (BN) political parties' congresses over the past three months.

First, during his trip to Sabah, also known as the Land Below The Wind, Dr Mahathir gave words of encouragement to Tan Sri Joseph Kurup-led PBRS by saying that "PBRS will not be forgotten in the next state election".

In launching the PBRS congress in Keningau recently, the Prime Minister said that as long as the people of Sabah especially PBRS supporters rally behind the BN, PBRS would never be forgotten -- a remark made in response to the PBRS' request for seats in the next state election.

The assurance from Dr Mahathir has been well-received by the Kadazandusun people especially PBRS' members with some saying that "this is a clear manifestation of the true practice of the power-sharing concept in BN as well as a recognition for small parties within the BN.

Soon after, Dr Mahathir sent Upko delegates into raptures when he indicated his wish that a leader of Upko should always be in the Federal Cabinet.

But again, in drumming up Kadazandusun's support for the BN, he said the leader concerned must be an "elected one" because a senator can only hold that post for a short time".

At the moment, Upko is led by Tan Sri Bernard Dompok and is also Minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

Yesterday, the much-awaited presence of Dr Mahathir at the 18th PBS congress became a reality and this time, he warmly welcomed the return of PBS to the BN fold.

Speaking before more than 5,000 people at the Dewan Hongkod Koisaan, he said the PBS return to the BN would certainly further strengthen the coalition front and would ensure greater victory for BN in the coming election.

Dr Mahathir said that he and other BN leaders were very happy when PBS expressed its intention to rejoin BN adding that "we never said we don't need them (PBS) because we were already strong enough. Instead we were very happy to hear of their imminent return to the BN."

"We are not greedy and we are willing to share with PBS," he said to the thunderous applause of the PBS diehard supporters.

The kind gesture from the BN chairman to the PBS camp showed that he is really a master of politics, who can devise strategies in any given situation.

The Prime Minister asserted that the power sharing concept practised in Malaysia was not mere pretence of sharing but sharing in reality.

To this, PBS president Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan said: "even though at one time I was his (PM's) "sparring partner" but actually I was his secret admirer."

"We are very proud of the role and contributions of YAB Datuk Seri for

uniting the people and this is also a vision of the PBS," he said.

A PBS delegate from Kiulu, Joos Galid said: "I really admire the way Dr Mahathir protects the interests of all people in the country."

"All Kadazandusun-led parties in Sabah seem to have equal share of opportunity in BN and we are looking forward to it," he said.

Joos said it was high time for all political parties in the state especially the Kadazandusun-based parties to bury the hatchet and work together for the common good.

Indeed, Dr Mahathir has set the stage for the Kadazandusun to be in the mainstream of national politics, and it is now entirely up to the community to make good of the parting gift.

-- BERNAMA

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