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Mahathir-UMNO

DR MAHATHIR: HIGH HOPES ON SABAH UMNO TO CONTRIBUTE TO BN'S VICTORY

KOTA KINABALU, May 16 (Bernama) -- The Umno headquarters is placing high hopes on the Sabah Umno to give an excellent performance to ensure victory for the Barisan Nasional (BN) in the next general election, said its president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Sabah Umno had the second largest membership in the country (after Johor) with 416,674 members and had strong influence in Sabah although it was formed only 12 years ago, said Dr Mahathir at the ground-breaking ceremony for the Sabah Umno building, here today.

Dr Mahathir, who is also prime minister, said the strong influence held by Umno, which leads the Sabah BN, had attracted the attention of others in the state to join components of the ruling party.

"Such is the influence of Umno in Sabah and certainly (Sabah) Umno contributes to the strength of Umno throughout Malaysia. Its contribution is most significant because we find that in Sabah, Umno frequently wins all the seats that it contested.

"I am not exaggerating if I say that Umno places high hopes on the Sabah Umno in the next general election," he said.

At the function, Dr Mahathir also recalled the history of Umno's formation which aimed to defend the rights of the Malays that were being threatened with the formation of the Malayan Union and the struggles of Umno together with the other ethnic communities to gain Malaya's independence from the British.

Although it succeeded in defending Malaya from being colonised through the Malayan Union, Umno was not greedy and was willing to share with the other ethnic communities in the country until Malaysia succeeded and was acknowledged as the most advanced among the developing countries in the world today, he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that Umno had never contested for more than 50 per cent of the seats available for grabs in the elections.

"Umno purposely fielded candidates which make up less than 50 per cent of the seats in Parliament. Even if Umno were to win, it is not possible for it to form its own government," he said.

Umno did not intend to do that and was more willing to work together with the other ethnic communities so that their interests were not neglected, he added.

Dr Mahathir said: "Even if Umno were to win in all the seats it contested, it is still insufficient and (Umno) will depend on the other BN component parties to work together to form a BN government."

With cooperation from the BN component parties, a credible government with a two-thirds majority that can administer the country well could be set up besides ensuring that all races were represented in the BN government, he said.

He said the Umno-led government was fair to everyone and not cruel although some alleged that the country was being led by a dictator feared by the people.

A dictator would certainly be afraid of the people because of his cruelty like (former) Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, for example, where the people had difficulty in approaching or meeting him as he was always surrounded by the Republican Guards.

Dr Mahathir said: "If it is true that the country is being ruled by a dictator, the people will certainly not get close to the dictator, a

dictator who chooses to hold elections and now will retire on his own accord."

Meanwhile, Datuk Musa Aman, chairman of the State Umno Liaison Body and Sabah Chief Minister, said the construction of Umno's own building signified the party's appreciation for Dr Mahathir's struggles and services in bringing Umno to Sabah.

Musa said: "It is also a symbol of our determination and commitment to preserve and build up on what Datuk Seri (Dr Mahathir) has initiated. The building is a manifestation of our determination to ensure that Umno is strong in Sabah."

The 10-storey Sabah Umno Building costing an estimated RM35 million will be built on a 0.48-hectare site at Karamunsing, here.

-- BERNAMA

MK AO