

Dr M on rivalry from within

7 JUN 1997

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Datuk Seri Dr **Mahathir Mohamad** said today rivalry among groups within Barisan Nasional component parties is a development that "we should not be too worried about."

The Prime Minister and BN chairman said that some component parties, including Umno and the Gerakan, were now facing challenges from within.

"This is something we should not be too worried about because the Barisan has overcome greater obstacles, as shown by its success in last year's general election, and more recently, in Gopeng," he added.

He hoped that the challenges within these component parties would lead to a higher level of political maturity of the

members.

Opening the 16th Gerakan delegates' conference at the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka here, he expressed confidence that component parties facing challenges from within would be able to overcome them and be united again.

Various races

Dr Mahathir said BN component parties had their "ups and downs," but they had been proven time and again that they were united in facing challenges to the ruling coalition.

Unity in the component parties was important for the Barisan to provide a strong leadership in its efforts to develop the country.

Only the Barisan Nasional, with its experience, could steer the country toward greater accomplishments.

"This is possible because the Barisan has members from the various races and it is generally accepted and welcomed by the people," Dr Mahathir added.

"And this has been proven in every general election."

No other party, said Dr Mahathir, could claim that it was capable of representing Malaysia's multi-racial society.

"This fact is made clear during every general election when the people reject appeals, promises and slogans of the opposition parties," he said.

"This confidence in the Barisan is what we should protect and promote."