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Mahathir-Party

BN REMAINS AS A COALITION

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 9 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the Barisan Nasional (BN) is not ready to become a single party and will remain as a coalition until the idea of a single party is accepted by everyone.

He said the BN would serve as a coalition to protect the interests of all its component parties, including those with a minority voice.

"We feel that not only will we continue with the BN method, that is, we will not become a single party, but we will also continue as a coalition because in a coalition no one will lose his right to speak up by reason of being a minority group," the BN chairman said after chairing the BN meeting here.

Asked when a BN single party would become a reality, he said: "We feel that the time has not come. That time comes when we all forget that we are Malays, Chinese, Indians, Japanese, or whatever, and count ourselves only as Malaysians."

He said that now there were still Malay, Chinese and Tamil schools which kept the communities apart.

Stressing the need for a coalition to protect their interests, he said: "In a coalition', everyone will have a say. If we have one party the majority group may usurp all the places in the party and the small group will not have enough votes," he said.

Asked whether retaining the BN as a coalition would not be inconsistent with the proposal to evolve a Malaysian race, he said: "We are trying to evolve a Malaysian race, but up to now we have still not evolved a national language."

Referring to some parties who disputed whether the Malay language should be recognised as the national language, he said: "Some say this is not the national language, this is the Malay language...and (they) are angry if it is called the national language. So, if it is not the national language, it is the Malay language for the Malays only."

Dr Mahathir said the government was still continuing with its efforts to create a Malaysian race despite the obstacles posed by many parties.

Asked whether the obstacles came from within the BN he said there were obstacles everywhere including from the media.

BN secretary-general Datuk Mohamed Rahmat, when asked to comment on the decision to retain the BN as a coalition, said it was ideal for Malaysia to set up a single BN party but the time was not ripe.

"This is because we still face parochialism and communalism, but we must continue with our efforts. Take Umno for example. Previously it was only open to the Malays but now it is open to bumiputeras irrespective of religion," he said.

The creation of one party irrespective of race, religion or parochialism required a long time and could only be done in stages, he said.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said that under the present circumstances and time it was not possible to dissolve the BN component parties to form a single party although it was a good idea.

"Good ideas must be implemented at the right time. If a good proposal is carried out at the wrong time it will fail," he said.

Gerakan president Datuk Seri Lim Keng Yaik said a single party representing all the communities would take time because it depended on the

perception of the people, the majority of whom still emphasised origin and race.

"But we have a programme to evolve a Malaysian race in 2020...then, if the people have confidence in one Malaysian race irrespective of race or origin maybe the BN can be made a single party," he said.

Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) president Datuk Yong Teck Lee said the idea of a single party was a possibility in future.

He said that under the BN concept, the interests of component parties, big or small, were always protected.

Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS) president Datuk Leo Moggie said the concept of a BN coalition was the most practical because the time had not come for the people to forget their race.

He said the people and the country were not ready to accept the fact that one party encompassing all the races could move more progressively than the current concept of coalition.