

BN members understand the need to close ranks: PM

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Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today denied speculation that his economic adviser Tan Sri Ali Abul Hassan Sulaiman will be appointed the next finance minister.

"You can speculate. You wait and see if these speculations is worth anything at all.

"I don't understand why people make so much baseless speculations and yet there are people who still want to believe it," he told a press conference at the end of the BN convention.

On his team of economic matters, Mahathir said: "I have two deputy ministers, one secretary-general to the finance minister, the central bank governor and two economic advisers. I have a lot of people working with me."

Asked whether one of these people may be appointed as the next finance minister, he said:

"I don't know ... maybe the secretary-general will be the next prime minister or the next finance minister, you can speculate."

On the convention, Mahathir expressed happiness on the outcome and said that there was a strong show of spirit and commitment among coalition members in which all the members acknowledged there was a need to close ranks.

He said there was a call for such convention to be held often at all levels in the branches and divisions and the need to activate BN's machinery.

There was a call to improve BN's secretariat and a centre which provides information on the coalition, he said, adding "we are confident the BN will continue to progress and lead the country in the years to come."

On Bangsa Malaysia which he had mentioned in the 1995 BN convention

which was again mentioned today, Mahathir said previously it was not so clear but this time around the spirit on Bangsa Malaysia was more stronger based on the expression shown by the coalition leaders during their speeches.

"Although we are not of the same race our commitment to Malaysia is strong and this differs from the opposition party who always turn to foreign help when they are in trouble," he added.

In attracting young generation, he said this can be done by moving closer to the people.

On religious extremist, he said: "If we understand the problem and stay united, we will be able to overcome the problem.

"Religious extremists do not follow the religion as they create their own beliefs and interpretations which differ from Islamic teachings."