

BN aims to bec

PM: Component members believe

Nst - 8 JUL 2001

BARISAN Nasional will eventually evolve into a single party but all component parties believe that this should take place gradually.

BN chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said this was the general sentiment of all component members who felt that the process of turning into a single party should not be rushed into or done in haste.

Winding up at the end of the BN convention yesterday, the Prime Minister said: "It should be an evolution instead of revolution. I also think this is the best approach for us... to take gradual steps but

achieving our goals, instead of trying to jump where we can fall flat on our face."

Dr Mahathir said he was impressed with the strong determination shown by component parties towards the creation of a Bangsa Malaysia.

He said BN strove to be closer with the people, especially the younger generation who would inherit the country from present leaders.

This way, they would be exposed to BN's struggle and also accept and continue it, he added.

The Prime Minister was confi-

dent that BN would continue to enjoy the people's support as they could see the difference between the BN coalition and the Opposition.

While BN conducted its convention in a civilised manner with speakers conveying their messages accordingly, Pas resorted to hurling accusations against the Government and its leaders and spreading lies at its *ceramah*.

"They have called me *anjing*, *dajal* and many more abusive words. BN will not reciprocate in a similar fashion as we are not as ill-mannered as them."

Waheed, Chow Kum Hor, Nelson Fernandez, Hizreen Kamal and Firdaus Abdullah

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Alluding to the speakers' fluency in Bahasa Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said this demonstrated the success of BN's policies towards language, religion, and the economy.

Although Bahasa Malaysia and Islam were the national language and official religion respectively, freedom of worship and use of other languages was enshrined in the Constitution.

"Besides mosques, there are also temples and churches around. Though the Bumiputeras are given privileges, it is not done at the expense of the economic rights of the other races.

"What's done is to expand the economic cake."

When Umno proposed the Malay unity talk with Pas, Dr Mahathir said Pas rejected it, demanding the agenda to be expanded to cover national unity.

"We are not staging a play (*sandiwara*) like Pas did when they rejected the talks, purportedly because they gave priority to national unity.

"There is no need for Pas to do this (national unity) as this has been successfully implemented by the BN for a long time. Pas should stop its *sandiwara* as we know

their true intention."

On the one hand, Dr Mahathir said the party purportedly wanted national unity but on the other, it wanted to set up a Pas-style Islamic state.

"Umno does not reject an Islamic state. We view the country as Islamic, because in such a state there can exist other races and religions. Islam also advocates treating other races fairly.

"That's why we say we are an Islamic country, one which does not adversely impede the rights of other races and those with different religions."