

Act as one

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Dr M: Barisan to concentrate on development of Bangsa Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR: The vision of a single Malaysian race took a step closer to reality when Barisan Nasional component party leaders pledged to support this ideal by strengthening co-operation within the coalition.

Barisan chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the leaders would concentrate on the development of a *Bangsa Malaysia* instead of their respective communities.

The Prime Minister also said that Barisan leaders must close ranks and work together as one party to ensure continuous support from the people in an environment which was getting more hostile towards the coalition.

Speaking at the one-day Barisan convention here yesterday, Dr Mahathir said the coalition must be prepared to face society, part of which was getting more wild, violent and no longer cared about the interest of the country.

He said that in facing this new challenge, the current

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practice where leaders gave more attention to their own race was no longer healthy.

"Many of the younger generation no longer believe in the principle of racial co-operation promoted by Barisan. They believe that the country's achievements thus far were incidental and that they can continue to live the good life they currently enjoy irrespective of which party is in government.

"To address this problem, we must strengthen our co-operation at all levels and Barisan people's representatives must be seen to give equal attention to all races within their constituencies," he added.

Barisan's new approach, Dr Mahathir said, should emphasise on the Malaysian race and leaders must solve whatever problems which arose as one entity and not through different approaches.

"I am confident that sooner or later Barisan will evolve into one party and not just a component of 13 parties," he said.

He said the Barisan supreme council was currently in the process of formulating guidelines for all component party leaders on their respective roles towards achieving this objective.

In his winding-up speech, Dr Mahathir said the aim to make Barisan a single party instead of a coalition could be

achieved through the process of evolution and not revolution.

"That is the Barisan way, we always put great emphasis on being patient so that whatever we do will succeed," he added.

At a press conference later, the Prime Minister said the component parties showed a greater commitment towards creating a Malaysian race compared with six years ago.

Dr Mahathir had first expressed the intention of forming a single Malaysian race at the Barisan convention in 1995.

"This is opposed to the opposition parties which do not have any commitment towards achieving a single Malaysian race and they always request assistance from foreign parties," he added.

On whether there was a need for discussion among the component parties towards this goal, Dr Mahathir said:

"This is not a matter of discussion. It is a matter of inculcating a spirit of love for the country and regarding Malaysians, regardless of race, as being a single race that is a Malaysian race."

Saying that the spirit of unity was also clear among every component party leader this year, the Prime Minister said he was confident that Barisan could progress and remain in power in the coming years.

He said, however, he could not guarantee when Barisan would achieve the goal of having a single party.