

BN to face issues as a party, not coalition

STAR - 1 APR 2001

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KUALA LUMPUR: Barisan Nasional will in future approach and face issues like a party rather than as a coalition of parties, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The Barisan chairman and Umno president said all leaders of the 14 component parties in the coalition wanted to face challenges together and place the interest of Barisan first instead of their own parties.

"They want Barisan Nasional to function more as a party rather than a coalition," he said after chairing the ruling coalition's supreme council meeting at Putra World Trade Centre here yesterday.

With the decision, the Barisan supreme council would meet more frequently, he said.

"The Barisan Nasional will have its own headquarters in Kuala Lumpur with the appropriate facilities," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Barisan component parties appeared to be acting on their own except during elections.

"Barisan seemed to be acting through different component parties except during elections when we determine who should stand and where to contest.

"If there are any problems now, we will look at them from the Barisan's angle. We need to have a common stand on issues so we solve them as a Barisan problem and not as a single party's problem, not individually," he added.

However, Dr Mahathir said there would always be some party members who would not agree with the collective decision of the Barisan.

"Even in a party like Umno for example, the leadership may decide something but there are some members in Umno who don't agree.

"That is normal. What's important is that we agree among the (component) parties and the parties have representation in Barisan. They speak as one and they agree to what is decided by Barisan," he said.

He said it was up to the leaders of the component parties to convince their members

and supporters.

Dr Mahathir said Barisan would hold a convention with the theme *Barisan Nasional Tunggak Keutuhan Negara* or "Barisan Nasional the Pillar of Strength of the Nation" at PWTC on July 7.

"All component parties will be represented. Some 3,000 delegates of various levels will attend the convention," he added.

Barisan comprises 14 component parties from the peninsula, Sabah and Sarawak.

On a separate matter, Dr Mahathir said Barisan representatives should go to the ground more often to find out the grouses of the people.

"There are certain people who do not go to the ground to find out the problems faced by the squatters for example," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he had a meeting with representatives of the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industries of Malaysia on the problems faced by the community's businessmen.

"We discussed some of the problems of doing business in this country and how to facilitate co-operation between Chinese and bumiputra businessmen," he said, adding he would receive a memorandum from the association later.