

07 JUL 2001

Mahathir-Party

DR MAHATHIR OPTIMISTIC BN WILL BECOME A PARTY IN ITS OWN RIGHT

KUALA LUMPUR, July 7 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is optimistic that the Barisan Nasional will one day become a party in its own right and not remain a coalition comprising many component parties.

He said developments were already taking place in that direction especially in Sabah where various parties accept the ethnic races in the state.

"I am optimistic that with time BN will become a party in its own right and will not remain a coalition," he said in his keynote address at the one-day Fourth BN Convention at the Putra World Trade Centre here today.

The BN chairman also said Umno itself had received the Kadazan and Chinese (from the Akar party which has since been dissolved) in Sabah as members of the party.

"This is a development which should be given attention by all other component parties of BN, that is not to give priority to one race only but to accommodate all other races," he said.

He added that BN from those days had a goal to realise a Malaysian race as the "BN is a party for the Malaysian race".

However, Dr Mahathir admitted that this vision would take time to become a reality as some changes must be brought about including, ensuring equal economic status and to wipe out suspicion among one another.

"With this approach, suspicion can be considerably reduced and cooperation among BN parties can be enhanced to such an extent that the race factor will not dominate things. We will take time but this is our objective," he said.

BN was formed in 1974 and its members comprise 13 component parties and had its humble beginnings from the days of Parti Perikatan which existed before independence.

-- BERNAMA

RV SHS MAM DVS