

Continue integration policy, says PM

SUN 20 DEC 2002

KUCHING: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad wants Barisan Nasional (BN) component parties to continue with the integration policy to ensure racial harmony and stability.

He said it has worked well for the country because the political parties are not extreme in views.

"Political parties in the BN accept the fact this is a multiracial, multicultural and multireligious country and therefore we should be tolerant of other races, cultures, religions and languages," he said when opening the 19th triennial delegates conference of the Sara-

wak United People's Party (SUPP) at its headquarters here yesterday.

Mahathir, who is also BN chairman, said the government does not intend to assimilate anyone, a move previously rejected by the people.

"What we want is to integrate different races and different tribal groups into one society, each one playing its own role with no one higher than the other ... this (integration) has worked very well but not assimilation," he said.

Mahathir said unlike other countries where migrants have to accept the cul-

ture, language and sometimes the religion of the majority, Malaysia does not want to assimilate its people into one race.

There was no bitterness and anger between the races in Malaysia because it is one of the few countries in the world that allows its people to have education in their own languages, their own schools but yet conform to the national education policy, he said.

He said Malaysians love stability and because of that they are willing to stay with the political parties that contributed to stability.

The SUPP, a Sarawak BN component party, is one of

the parties which has contributed to stability in the state and country.

Despite having the Chinese as the majority of its members, it was sensitive to other non-Chinese members, Mahathir said.

"This is the characteristic of Malaysians. We are sensitive to other people's feelings and we do not do things that will aggravate matters, that can cause tension among us."

He said Malaysians should count themselves lucky.

"We can give ourselves a pat on the back for our achievements so far but the process is still far from over," Mahathir said.