

I WON'T QUIT: DR M

P - STAR 27 NOV 1983

ALOR STAR, Sat — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad denied rumours today that he was quitting as Prime Minister. The rumours started sometime after the amendments to the Federal Constitution were passed by Parliament. The amendments have yet to receive royal assent.

"It is not I who elected myself to become Prime Minister but the people. Therefore I do not have the right to resign except if asked by the people," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said to thunderous ap-

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plause from thousands who gathered to greet him amidst a sea of banners and placards at the airport near here.

The Prime Minister, who is on a short visit to his homestate, Kedah, likened himself to a tool to be used by the people according to their wishes. "If the people think this tool is no longer useful, they can throw it away and choose another, but that person must be willing to carry out his tasks,"

he said.

The thread that ran through his speech, which was punctuated by cries of support, was how the ordinary rakyat had fought to establish modern Malaysia and how important the rakyat's voice was.

It was the rakyat who had protested against the Malayan Union after the Second World War; it was the rakyat who wanted a democratic system that would enable them to choose their

own leaders. It was always the people who had fought for their own destiny.

Because of this, he said, the wishes of the majority must never take second place to that of the minority. It was the people's wish, he added.

Under democracy, people had enjoyed many benefits — the most important of which was that they had the power to remove through the ballot box leaders who they thought unfit.

"If the people feel that they no longer require me, then they can always elect someone else to take my place," he said, adding that the Government and he had no intention of holding on to power permanently.

But, he said, "while we are trying to show how we practise democracy, there are people who are accus-

ing us of trying to form a republic. But I have proof that those who are accusing us of this are themselves harbouring ambitions of setting up a republic.

"They sent a memorandum to the Government saying the amendments to the Constitution were not acceptable to them. At the same time, they said the Constitution should be abolished altogether. Their aim is that once it is abolished they can get rid of all existing institutions and they can then set up a republic."

"They are talking about an Islamic republic, but their aims are very different from Islam."

He said there were certain people who were taking

Mammoth welcome in pictures — page 5

advantage of the situation to confuse the public. Government leaders, he said, had therefore a duty to explain to the public the correct position in order to avoid confusion.

And of the Constitution amendments issue, he said: "We will try to settle this matter in an amicable manner because we are civilised people."

Among those present to receive the Prime Minister were Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Nahar Shahabuddin, Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Ali Ahmad, state dignitaries and members of Barisan Nasional component parties from Kedah and Perlis.