

Mahathir: I will not quit

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DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today quashed rumours that he will step down as Prime Minister.

Amidst shouts of "*Kami mahu Che Det*" (people from Kedah call Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir '*Che Det*') from a crowd of more than 50,000 who had jammed Sultan Abdul Halim airport to welcome him, the Prime Minister said he would lead the country for as long as the people needed him.

"I have no right to step down unless the *rakyat* want me to do so. If the *rakyat* decide that I can no longer carry out my duties, then I will willingly step down," he said to shouts of "*Jangan, jangan*" and "*Hidup Mahathir*".

He did not elect himself Prime Minister. The people had chosen him and, therefore, only they could force him to step down.

The Prime Minister said he was a "tool" to be used by the people.

"If the people think this tool is no longer useful, they can throw it away and choose another."

**By SHUKOR RAHMÂN:
Alor Star, Saturday.**

"Your ballot papers cannot tell us your actual feelings, but a gathering like this certainly does."

The Prime Minister said if the *rakyat* had not demonstrated against the Malayan Union pro-

vide their own fate and elections gave the people an opportunity to choose their leaders.

During the 26 years of democracy, he said, attention had been given to the *rakyat* in both rural

A Prime Minister would not last for ever, but the people would.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said certain elements in the country had spread all sorts of rumours to confuse the people.

These elements, he said, were trying to fish in troubled waters by alleging that the Government was trying to set up a republic.

"These people sent a memorandum to the Government saying that our action was detrimental to the country, but at the same time they suggested our Constitution be abolished."

Majority

These people, he said, actually wanted to get rid of all our institutions and to set up a republic.

"We are not out to fight anyone and neither are we taking away power from anyone.

"What we want is to put into practice what is in our Constitution."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the Government's aim was only to serve the *rakyat*.

Leaders, he said, would not be in power for ever.

"Every five years there is an 'interview', and in my case, the interviewers are the 50,000 voters in my constituency.

"If we have blundered the people can reject us. But if we do what is right, the *rakyat* will certainly support us," he said to a cheering crowd.

"The great majority should not be neglected. It must prevail.

posals, the British would never have believed that they were against it.

"But when the people demonstrated against the concept, even the mighty British were forced to back down."

Malaysia, he said, chose democracy in order to let the people de-

and urban areas as compared with the colonial era when schools and clinics were only built in urban centres.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, who was visibly touched by the tremendous reception, pledged to uphold the aspirations of the people.