

MAHATHIR: GOVT TO GET GOING AT ONCE

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that he expects the Government "to get going immediately" and said the new Cabinet would have its first meeting on Thursday.

The Prime Minister said that the four new Ministers and several new Deputy Ministers appointed were people with experience.

There would be no major changes in the Government's policies because "we think we're on the right track. That is why we have been re-elected," he told a Press conference after announcing the new Cabinet.

Dr Mahathir added that "some people" might think that just because "some opposition members" were elected, the Barisan Na-

sional must follow what the Opposition wanted it to do.

"Well, we follow what our voters want us to do," he said and added that the ruling coalition would try to fulfil all the pledges made during the recent election campaign.

"We will continue to serve the people and defend their rights against those who want to defend the rights of only some people," he said.

"Being pragmatic people, we assessed the (new) Ministers and Deputy Ministers on, among other things, their capability and the interests of the party, politics and nation."

Dr Mahathir added that the Cabinet members were appointed after consultation with leaders of Barisan

component parties and pointed out that Gerakan president Datuk Dr Lim Keng Yaik had his party deputy Datuk Paul Leong dropped as Primary Industries Minister at the request of the Gerakan.

Dr Mahathir said no "new formula" had been used in choosing the line-up.

"The line-up was chosen after consulting Barisan leaders and after consultation with (Deputy Prime Minister) Encik Abdul Ghafar Baba although the prerogative is mine.

"We followed what has been the practice in the past. There are no changes in terms of emphasis or interests of any one component party.

"We comprise people who are quite conservative. We

don't believe in radicalism. We don't believe that by making radical changes, we can solve problems," he said.

Dr Mahathir, while agreeing that the MCA's representation in the Cabinet had been reduced from four to three "for the moment," said that the party's number of Deputy Ministers remained at six and hinted that the party would get back another Minister's post.

Encik Ghafar, in addition to being appointed National and Rural Development Minister, also holds the Housing and Local Government portfolio, a Ministry normally allocated to a MCA representative.

Asked if Encik Ghafar was holding the housing

portfolio pending the outcome of MCA president Tan Koon Swan's court case in Singapore which is scheduled to be heard tomorrow, he said: "The likelihood is that the seat is reserved for the MCA."

On the MIC's request for two Ministers, he said that many people had hoped for more Ministers and Deputy Ministers "but unfortunately we don't have enough seats in the Cabinet room as well as in Parliament."

"We have decided on the number of (Cabinet Ministers) and that is all that we can have," he said.

Dr Mahathir also stressed that previous Cabinets had been "dynamic but the picture given by others (based on their political interests) could be something else."

He also said that two Deputy Ministers were appointed in certain Ministries to fill the manpower needs in the "more important" Ministries.

He described as "a normal one" the transfer of Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen from the Foreign Ministry to Information.

Dr Mahathir also said that Usno, which does not have a representative in the new Government, might be given a post later.

On the vacancy in the Ministry of Justice, following the retirement of Datuk Dr James Ongkili, Dr Mahathir said that it was not a separate Ministry because Dr Ongkili had also been Minister in the Prime Minister's Department.