

# BN will win next election, says Dr M

KUALA KLAWANG, Sat. — Umno, its strength and unity restored, is ready to lead the Barisan Nasional to face the general election, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said with the political situation stable and the economy improving, the Barisan Nasional was confident of victory.

Responding to newsmen after opening the Jelebu Umno division's delegates' meeting at the community hall, Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said his critics would "of course" scoff at his confidence.

"But like in the 1986 general election where they predicted Umno would lose many of its seats, I am confident the coming general election will again see us winning almost all the constituencies we contest in," he said.

In his speech earlier, Dr Mahathir said Semangat '46 was a minor party with little hope of winning the coming general election.

"At most, they can only irritate," he said, describing them like "mosquitoes who irritate people in their sleeping nets." This was greeted by laughter from the floor.

He also said former Umno leaders in the Semangat '46 were not champions of the Malay struggle as they professed to be.

He claimed they were willing to throw their support behind opposition parties if they felt they had no chance of winning in a particular constituency.

He cited the recent Teluk Pasu by-election where Semangat '46 had supported Pas, which some of the former Umno leaders had, at one time, tried to destroy.

Dr Mahathir said these former Umno leaders had tried to win the Malays' support by playing up issues, such as producing an economic manifesto listing the alleged mismanagement of the economy.

"But now the economy is recovering, why aren't these leaders brave enough to admit they were wrong and come back and support us," he asked.

He said the former Umno leaders were now changing their strategy to one of running down party leaders with wild and baseless allegations after their attempts to play up and distort certain issues had failed.

Among other things, these former Umno leaders had alleged that Umno and the Government were run in a dictatorial manner.

Dr Mahathir said there was no truth in these allegations. "How can I speak alone during an Umno Supreme Council meeting which sometimes lasted until 3am in the morning, like the meeting called to discuss the move by Datuk Musa Hitam to resign from the Government.

"Or for that matter, how can I speak during the entire duration of Cabinet meetings, which normally

last from 9am to 1pm. It (the allegation) is just not true."

In Kuala Lipis, Dr Mahathir urged the people not to risk everything they enjoyed now by voting in a Government comprising the present opposition parties.

The Prime Minister said a Government comprising Semangat '46, Pas and the DAP would fail because such a coalition would be vulnerable, as none of the three parties could emulate the anchor role which Umno played in the Barisan Nasional.

"None of these three par-

ties can win enough seats for them to be the backbone of a coalition Government.

"Semangat '46 leaders claimed they can win 40 seats while Pas and DAP can win 20 seats and 30 seats respectively.

"Yes, they can form a Government but it would be unstable and can fall anytime if any of the three parties pulls out of the coalition.

"It will always exist in fear of such a thing happening, and would be ineffective and unable to govern," Dr Mahathir said when opening the Lipis

Umno divisional assembly at the Lipis district council hall here.

The Prime Minister said that not every coalition Government was like the Barisan Nasional, with a party like Umno acting as its backbone.

"We in the Barisan Nasional can even decide our candidates before the general election and contest under one banner," he said.

Dr Mahathir said many coalition governments elsewhere had difficulties governing because there was no single party which could win enough seats to

rule on its own.

They had to rely on smaller parties which often threatened to bring the Government down over minor differences.

"We don't want this to happen here," he said.

The Prime Minister added that independence might not have been obtained as early as 1957 if half the Malays supported Umno and the other half supported Pas.

"It was because the Malays were united in the struggle for independence that the British conceded independence in 1957," he said.