

PM CHALLENGES OPPOSITION

'Show off your economic plans'

By AHIRUDIN ATTAN

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad challenged the opposition in the Johore Baru by-election last night to line up their development programmes for the people instead of making personal attacks on the present government leadership.

He told a dinner gathering of some 1,000 people at the Johore Menteri Besar's residence that the opposition so far appears to be more concerned with bludgeoning certain figures in the leadership, "especially myself".

In doing so, the opposition has strayed from what will be the interest of the Johore Baru people, he added.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, who arrived yesterday afternoon to lead the Barisan Nasional (BN) campaign for Thursday's by-election, expressed shock at the opposition's lack of attention to development programmes.

He said the people's well-being is still the most important thing for the Barisan Nasional.

Datuk Shahrir Abdul Samad,

former Cabinet minister in Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir's administration, vacated the Johore Baru parliamentary seat on July 1 after deciding not to join Umno. He is contesting on an independent ticket and faces BN candidate Haji Mas'ud Haji Abdul Rahman and Partai Sosialis Rakyat Malaysia (PSRM) national deputy chairman Abdul Razak Ahmad.

The Prime Minister said the opposition's preoccupation with trying to topple the leadership will only make the people suffer. If Datuk Shahrir is concerned about the people of Johore Baru, he should tell them what he will do for them in terms of development and economic plans, he added.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir added that Datuk Shahrir was "toying around" with the constitution and using the people of Johore Baru as a platform to express his anger at the present leadership.

"A seat should only be vacated if the incumbent is deceased

or is not able to serve the people due to illness. In this case the incumbent (Datuk Shahrir) is well and campaigning," he said.

Later, the Prime Minister challenged any party from the deregistered Umno to prove that they can garner as much support from the Malays as Umno (Baru).

"They'd be lucky if they can get 10,000 members," he said.

He was obviously referring to former Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah's efforts to form another party to compete with Umno (Baru).

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president and BN chairman, said some one million people have so far registered with Umno.

Last night's gathering was attended by, among others, Johore Menteri Besar Haji Muhyiddin Haji Mohd Yassin, Negri Sembilan Menteri Besar Datuk Isa Abdul Samad, and Health Minister Datuk Chan Siang Sun.