

PM advises hawkers not to vote DAP

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — The Prime Minister today called on hawkers and petty traders not to vote for any candidate put up by the DAP to replace Mr Lee Lam Thye who has quit politics.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad made the call when he launched a City Hall training programme for hawkers and petty traders at the Putra World Trade Centre.

He described Mr Lee, the MP for Bukit Bintang, as a former champion of hawkers.

"It is not that we are angry with him (for being a hawkers' champion). Sometimes, he does good work. But, there is no point to vote for his replacement from that party."

He said with a Barisan Nasional MP for the constituency, there would be more efforts to help the hawkers and petty traders although it did not mean that the Government had not been treating them well in the past.

Dr Mahathir told reporters later that even though Mr Lee would not admit there was friction in the DAP, "it was generally known that his attitude is different from other DAP leaders".

He said it was also common knowledge that Mr Lee had differences with

DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang.

On an allegation by Mr Lim that the Government was inviting South African freedom fighter Nelson Mandela for a visit here to help campaign in the general election, Dr Mahathir said the Opposition Leader was the one with the general election in mind all the time.

"When (PLO leader Yasser) Arafat was here, he also made this allegation. It was the same with the Commonwealth conference (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in October, 1989).

"He is the one with the general election on his mind all the time."

Dr Mahathir said he invited Mr Mandela, the deputy president of the African National Congress (ANC), because he has done a lot of good work in fighting apartheid in South Africa.

He said he extended the invitation to Mr Mandela and ANC president Walter Sisulu when he was in Lusaka earlier this year.

"We did not fix any date and it was up to them to decide on the date of the visit.

"In fact, we were only informed of the date by the ANC cultural troupe which was here recently."

Mr Mandela is expected to visit Malaysia on Oct 20.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir witnessed a pledge of support for the Barisan Nasional under his leadership by representatives of hawkers and petty traders.

They later presented him with a giant banner which contained the signatures of 10,000 hawkers and petty traders who pledged their support for him and the ruling party.

The Prime Minister said

the Government had changed its policy towards hawkers and City Hall was now helping hawkers instead of "hunting" them like in the past.

He said it was now easier to get licences from City Hall and more trading places had been established in the city.

While pledging to do his best to help them, he reminded them to be patient

and to expect problems as part and parcel of the business world.

Earlier, Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Datuk Suleiman Mohamad said hawkers and petty traders formed an important part of the economy.

He said one in every 10 persons in the city was involved in petty trading.