

Musa retiring from politics: Mahathir

By Zulkifli Talib and Wong Chun Wai

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Datuk Musa Hitam is adamant about not contesting in the general election because he is retiring from politics, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister and Umno president said he had tried to persuade the former Deputy Prime Minister to change his mind.

"Datuk Musa is no long-

er interested in politics. He only wants to serve the country in his present capacity," Dr Mahathir told newsmen after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting at the party headquarters here.

Datuk Musa, 56, the MP for Kota Tinggi, was appointed the country's special envoy to the United Nations in January.

Dr Mahathir said Datuk Musa's name was included in Umno's first list of candidates last week but was dropped following his

decision not to contest.

He said he had phoned Datuk Musa in New York to persuade him to contest after Datuk Musa had informed Johor Mentri Besar Tan Sri Muhyiddin Mohamed Yassin of his decision.

"He was adamant. He does not want to contest in the general election," Dr Mahathir said, adding that Datuk Musa had not wanted to announce his decision because he did not want to be bothered by appeals from his sup-

porters.

Asked whether Datuk Musa's decision would affect Umno's performance in Johor, Dr Mahathir said: "Karpal Singh said it will not."

His reply was an obvious reference to the Jelutong MP's comments on Mr Lee Lam Thye's decision to quit politics. Mr Karpal Singh had said that "no one was indispensable, including Lee Lam Thye" and that it was "the party that won the (Bukit Bintang) seat."