

BN needs two-thirds to be a strong govt: PM

By K.T. Arasu

PARIT RAJA, Wed. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the Barisan Nasional's target is to win two-thirds of the 180 seats in the Dewan Rakyat.

He said the new government would otherwise be weak and not respected by certain people.

"A strong government is essential for stability, and to bring development and progress to the people," he told reporters after addressing a gathering at the

Seri Gading operations room here.

Dr Mahathir said Barisan was facing the general election from a position of strength and that the opposition had been stumbling over its own accusations and allegations about the coalition.

He said the opposition could no longer allege that the country's economy was in dire straits or continue accusing the Government of not performing well.

"PAS seems to have dropped its ambition of setting up an Islamic state as proven by reports in the Malay and English newspapers," he said, adding that

the party's leaders had wanted this report to be published only in the Chinese press.

Dr Mahathir said the DAP had championed the rights of the non-Malays but was working with people whom it once branded anti-non-Malays.

"Mr Lee Lam Thye, who believed in working closely with all races, was isolated by the party," he added.

He reminded Barisan members not to allow in-fighting to affect the coalition's chances of an overwhelming victory in the general election.

He said incumbents who had not been re-nominated should not feel bitter or disappointed.

"These people should put the party's interests ahead of their own," he said.

He added that in every general election there were MPs or assemblymen who were not re-nominated. These changes, he said, were necessary for new people to be given a chance.

"Although many incumbents have been replaced, most of them have accepted the decision without disappointment or unhappiness," he said.