

sacrificed himself

PM: Mustaffa

By K.P. Waran

BATU PAHAT, Wed. — The exclusion of Welfare Services Minister Datuk Mustaffa Mohamad in the general election is no reflection of his performance in the party and Government, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Datuk Mustaffa had performed well as a Cabinet member and Umno leader and had introduced new ideas in the Ministry, the Prime Minister said.

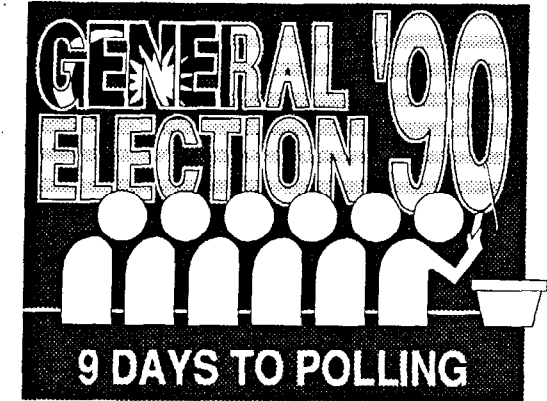
The move is a gradual exercise in changes in the formation of the new Government after the general election next week.

"It is common in general elections for incumbents to be left out and new candidates introduced. This is to enable an effective Government to be formed with more new ideas.

"The Government has a mandate to deliver the goods and there has to be flexibility to introduce changes," he told a gathering of more than 10,000 people at Datuk Mustaffa's home in Parit Raja, about 30km from here.

The Prime Minister said Datuk Mustaffa had agreed not to seek re-election to allow room for changes in the new Government later.

"After our discussion on this issue, Datuk Mustaffa willingly agreed not to seek



re-election. He decided to sacrifice himself for the sake of the party and Government and this is a very honourable gesture," said Dr Mahathir.

The Prime Minister urged Sri Gading Umno members not to be swayed by rumours that were being spread by the Opposition that Datuk Mustaffa had fallen out of favour with the Umno leadership.

"We are still very close ... I am not disappointed or angry with Datuk Mustaffa. In fact, he was one of my most staunch supporters when Umno was being rehabilitated following the court ruling against its legality," he said.

Datuk Mustaffa told the gathering that although he would not be contesting in

the general election it did not mean he was quitting politics.

"I shall continue to lead the community in Seri Gading and pledge my unwavering support for the Prime Minister and the Barisan Nasional," he said.

At one juncture Datuk Mustaffa broke down and cried when several people jeered Johor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

"Please, let's not misbehave. If you respect me, you must also respect my leaders," he said in an emotion-choked voice with tears streaming down his face.

He said certain elements were spreading rumours and allegations against other Umno leaders.