

PM: Barisan chance to win is good

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JITRA, Sat. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is confident the Barisan Nasional will win the ninth general election.

"I think there is a good chance for us to win, considering we've won quite a number of seats uncontested," said Dr Mahathir when reporters asked about the BN chances in the coming election.

He was speaking to reporters at Kubang Pasu district office's meeting room here after the completion of the nomination for the Kubang Pasu Parliamentary constituency.

When asked by a foreign journalist why the people should vote for him again and what he expected to achieve, Dr Mahathir said: "Well, it is not a question of voting for me, it is voting for the present Government, the system of Government.

"The Government in which all races in Malaysia have a role to play. They find this system of Government has resulted in peace and harmony among the different races in this country. And because there is peace and harmony, this country has been able to develop much faster than most other countries which have or haven't got the kind of problems that are posed by having a multi-racial society.

"So I am quite sure the people in this country value racial harmony, value the result of good relations between the races and the development that follows it and therefore would contin-

ue to support the BN."

Asked to comment on talk that the BN would chalk an "earthquake" victory and not merely a landslide win, Dr Mahathir said he did not expect an "earthquake" win.

He said the opposition parties would also be winning some seats.

"Our country is not a one-party State which conducts a mock election. There are countries where the Government party achieved 99 per cent success in the election and if non-Government candidates win, they will not be allowed to take part in the legislative process," he added.

Dr Mahathir said that in Malaysia, the Opposition had an opportunity to win, and even form a State Government, adding that the country was practising the right democratic system.

"No one here can say we are holding a mock election because the Opposition could win if the people want them. If the people do not want them, that's not our fault."

Asked how he wanted the world to look at Malaysia if the BN won the election, he said: "I think eventually they will accept Malaysia as a true democracy where we have certain values which differ from the rest of the world, but nevertheless they will appreciate the fact that our system, our way of doing things, is the formula of success."

Dr Mahathir said other countries could achieve similar success if they adopted the formula.

"We have grown by more than eight per cent over the

past seven years ... so we hope to be able to achieve this.

"And the world should acknowledge that although this is a multi-religious, multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-lingual country, we have managed to live at peace with each other.

"As you can see, of the people who seconded me, one is a Malay, another is a Chinese. In Malaysia, that is nothing unusual.

"You try and find that in some other multi-racial countries, you find that it is a strange thing," he replied to a question posed by a foreign journalist.

"But here we work together because we know what we should do is to grow to make the cake larger so that everyone will have a bigger slice. We don't rob Peter to pay Paul," he added.

On the leadership's decision to field Members of Parliament to contest State seats, Dr Mahathir said this would enable the representatives to exchange their experiences at State level.

He said that was one way of forging better rapport between the State and Federal Governments.

Asked whether Youth and Sports Minister Abdul Ghani Othman would be made the Johor Menteri Besar as Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin would be contesting the Parliamentary seat, Dr Mahathir said: "Maybe. We have not decided on Ghani."

Asked whether other MPs who were contesting the State seats would be made the Menteris Besar of the respective States, Dr Mahathir replied: "Not necessarily, they could be made Exco members."