

Opposition not serious about polls, says Dr M

MALACCA, Wed. — The Opposition is not serious about the general election and regards it only as a game, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the Opposition had no definite programme for the people or the country and was merely "contesting for the sake of contesting" against the Barisan Nasional.

"They don't have confidence that they can win. They are not serious and have no serious intention of forming the Government.

"This is wasteful and a burden to the people," he said in reply to questions at a Press conference at the Ayer Keroh Country Resort, about 16km from here, after meeting the BN candidates at a closed-door meeting.

Dr Mahathir, who is the Barisan Nasional chairman, had earlier addressed a large gathering at a "leader-meet-the-people" session at the Ayer Keroh Expo Centre.

He was also asked to assess the Barisan's election machinery based on his nationwide campaign, to which he expressed satisfaction.

"The system we have used and the operations rooms are all mobilised and are in full force."

Barisan shirt, was accompanied to the expo grounds by his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali, Chief Minister Datuk Mohamed Zin Abdul Ghani, Deputy Education Minister Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn, State MCA chief Datuk Gan Boon Leong and State Barisan leaders and candidates, including Ghafar.

In his address at the gathering, he urge the people not to vote those who could not afford to set up a Government.

He said the Opposition party, namely the Parti Melayu Semangat 46 in Malacca, was only contesting "because of jealousy of its president" who was power-hungry.

Dr Mahathir added the party could not even hope to set up an Opposition much less a Government.

He also called on S46 candidates to forget about contesting and to return and support Umno.

Dr Mahathir said there was no point for the people to support S46 which had no direction, the DAP which was undemocratic or Pas whose policies ran counter to Islamic teachings.

The Prime Minister again touched on the DAP's burning of the *Star* newspaper yesterday, describing it as

an intolerant party. Dr Mahathir said the support for BN was notable in Sabah. "And in Kelantan the atmosphere is different from that in 1990."

Asked to comment on Tun Mohamed Salleh Abas' candidacy in the Lembah Pantai parliamentary constituency, he said: "For a person who is ex-Lord President, I think that he should have some sense to understand that the election is not a place for venting your frustration and for seeking revenge against the Government and individuals."

"This is serious business to form the Government and to govern."

Asked on former Deputy Prime Minister Ghafar Baba defending his seat, Dr Mahathir said Ghafar never resigned from politics in the first place.

"It is only that he did not win the election for the deputy Umno presidency and this does not mean that he has withdrawn from politics."

Dr Mahathir said he respected Ghafar's continued support for the Barisan by taking part in campaigns.

Asked whether he would be included in the Cabinet, he said: "We have not decided... We are happy that he is going to stand in Jasir".

Dr Mahathir, wearing a signature blue long-sleeved

an intolerant party.

Dr Mahathir said for all its criticisms of a Press that is not free, the DAP had the *Rocket* which never had anything good to say about the BN.

"Now, if the DAP is the Government, there will not be the *Star*, *New Straits Times*... *Utusan*... instead we will have *Rocket One*, *Two*, *Three*... *Four*."

Meanwhile, Malacca BN chief Datuk Mohd Zin Abdul Ghani said the big turn-up at the expo centre reflected the people's support for Dr Mahathir, other BN leaders and the Government.

About 5,000, some of whom waited through a brief spell of heavy rain, listened to the Prime Minister.

Also present were 200 members of the local Portuguese community led by its headman Michael Young, who said they have been looking forward to meeting the Prime Minister.

"The fact that Dr Mahathir mentioned about our community in his address, showed that he cared for us," he said.

Dr Mahathir arrived at Batu Berendam airport from Muar by helicopter about 4pm before he was taken to Ayer Keroh Expo centre, 20km away, by a special entourage headed by Mohd Zin.