

PM: The 41 tried to deceive voters

By Azman Ahmad and Sufi Yusof

KUALA TERENGGANU, Thurs. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the 41 former Barisan Nasional party members who are contesting as Independents in the general election were expelled because they tried to deceive voters by claiming that they would be readmitted into the party if they win.

Dr Mahathir, who described them as traitors, said they tried to convince voters that voting them was like voting for the BN.

"These are lies. We do not accept traitors who join the party for the sake of being nominated and when they are not, they walk out on the party."

Dr Mahathir reiterated that these people would not be accepted by the party even if they won.

The Prime Minister was asked to comment on the expulsion of 41 BN members

including 34 from Umno, after a lunch hosted by Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad at the latter's official residence, here, today.

Asked why there was a large number of candidates sacked from the BN parties, he said this was because the candidates were from all over the country.

"Previously, this was done on a piecemeal basis and not in one go. We did not tally the number of candidates (contesting as Independents) in the last general election because their number was small," he said.

Asked if it would affect the BN's chances in the general election, Dr Mahathir said it would not.

"The candidates who were sacked will be dreaming if they still think they can win the seats they are contesting."

Asked to comment on the Opposition touching on racial issues in this election campaign compared to 1990, he said this was because the

Opposition had run out of ideas.

"That is why they are harping on racial and emotional sentiments. This is very dangerous.

"But they have Pas and friends overseas, and the foreign media is heaping praises on their efforts because they are not happy to see Malaysia enjoying peace and harmony."

Dr Mahathir said the foreign media was supportive of these groups to create disunity in Malaysia so that there would be chaos and the country would become uncompetitive with other foreign nations.

"They believe that the leaders of this country are Muslims and they want to depict Muslims as incapable of administering the country fairly."

Asked if the Government would take action against the Opposition for drumming up racial sentiments, the Prime Minister said it would not be easy to do so.

"If we act against them,

the foreign media will accuse us of being undemocratic. That is why Lim Kit Siang (DAP secretary-general) dares to challenge the police to detain him so that he can prove his allegation that there is no democracy in Malaysia and that Opposition party members are thrown in jail.

"Even if we act within the law, the foreign media would condemn us without even thinking that we are responsible for administering the laws in the country."

On Parti Melayu Semangat 46's decision to take legal action against the media for not being fair to political parties, Dr Mahathir said:

"To them it is not fair when they do not get the support they want (from the media). If they do get the support, then the Opposition will say that the media is fair," he said.

He added that the Government too could take legal action against *Time* magazine or *Newsweek*.

"But that is not our way."