

Dr M believes Barisan strong enough to win

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PORT MORESBY: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad expects the Barisan Nasional to win in the next general election as the economy is back on track and the ruling coalition's partnership is doing well.

The Prime Minister, who is leaving office in six days, said that it was time for him to go because Umno, the backbone of Barisan, was getting stronger and more popular among the people.

"I expect in the next general election we will win. We should not change the Government because we are angry the Government does not give us licences. We may not get anything from another government.

"We have a stable and prosperous country. Barisan has provided a good government in the states that we rule.

"If you want to know a bad government, you just go to the East Coast where the people migrate to other states since there are no jobs," he said in a speech to Malaysians working and living in Papua New Guinea.

"In Kuala Lumpur, there are many who run away from Kelantan and Terengganu. Unfortunately, they make money and go back to their states to vote for PAS," he added.

Dr Mahathir, who was here on a one-day visit, admitted it was difficult to resist the temptation to stay on.

"I have six more days. I will not be a Yang Amat Berhormat, only a Yang Berhormat, since I am still a member of parliament. I decided to step down after 22 years as prime minister, six years as deputy prime minister and two years as education minister.

"You can stay in office until you die but I have to resist the temptation and decide to leave when things are good. If you leave when things are bad, people will say you run away from responsibilities.

"Although we won the elections in 1999, Umno and the economy were not doing so well. It was my duty to restore Umno's popularity and the economy before I stepped down and I was able to do so with help from my colleagues," he added.

Dr Mahathir reminded Malaysians that the country's secret to success

was its power and wealth sharing among the multiracial society.

"We should be grateful that we have so much more than many other countries that have achieved independence.

"Malaysians are now everywhere. While we are making money in other countries we should remember our social obligations to the locals. Some

embassies have high walls and people don't like it, we want locals to like us."

Earlier, a cheerful Dr Mahathir who was on his last official visit as Prime Minister, said that after his many years of travelling to other countries, Malaysia was able to promote friendly relations without taking into account ide-

ologies and domestic situation.

"What we want is to have as many friends as possible and we will be safer with a lot of friends. Visits are important because it is vital for a trading nation like Malaysia to have close relations," he added.

■ PM credits policies for success — P4