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Dr M: No reason not to back BN

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SHAH ALAM, Thurs. - Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today those who hated him had no reason not to support the Barisan Nasional in the general election.

"I'm quite sure there are quite a lot of people who hate me. I think that is normal, I accept it. You cannot please everybody."

However, the former Prime Minister said those who supported BN when he was president, would continue to do so.

"Those people who supported me, I believe will support BN. I don't think they will turn against the BN simply because I am not the leader anymore," he added.

Dr Mahathir said he expected BN to win with a greater majority in the coming election as the Opposition had run out of issues against the ruling coalition.

He expects the Opposition, particularly Pas, would still try to entice Muslim voters with the promise of heaven, even though it made no sense.

"If you are a good person, and fulfil your religious obligations, you will have a place in heaven, not because you vote for someone.

"(Are they saying that) someone who murders and steals, but in the election votes for Pas, will go to heaven? That's impossible."

Asked whether it was a good time to hold the election, he said the timing looked right as the economy was strong and stock market was improving.

He also said the timing of the election was suitable as the response to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was good.

On politicians who may not be chosen to contest in the coming elections, Dr Mahathir said nobody could expect to be a representative forever.

"Not even me. We have to give opportunities to other people," he added.

Dr Mahathir said he would be involved in the election campaign by helping out in his home state of Kedah, and wherever he would be asked to.

"It depends on those running the campaign. If they want me to go, I'll go. I won't be barging in anywhere on my own," he said.

On changes made to several Government contracts awarded during his tenure as Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir said: "I think it is the right of the Government to do whatever they like.

"If they feel they should terminate contracts, they terminate contracts. If they feel they should have a re-assessment or re-tendering, that's (also) their right. I have no right to question."

He also said the Government "must have good reasons" to pare down its equity holdings in public-listed companies.

Dr Mahathir was speaking after launching the Putrajaya Medallion at the Royal Mint of Malaysia here today.

The copper and nickel medallion, measuring 33.7mm in diameter, 2.6 mm in thickness and weighing 16.8gm, is issued to commemorate the conferment of Federal Territory status on Putrajaya, Malaysia's new administrative centre, on Feb 1, 2001.