

PVI TO carry on

Dr M: I will continue leading country for as long as needed

By Toh Ah Nee, Ghee Kok Chung and Vivian Ho

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says he is willing to continue leading the government if he is still needed.

However, the prime minister said: "It is difficult to know when people don't like you. But I ask God and my colleagues in the government that should there be a clear signal, I will step down."

But he promised that, if God's willing, he will still be the prime minister for the next 15 years.

He was addressing a lunch hosted by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to honour him as the country's longest-serving premier. Mahathir succeeded Tun Hussein Onn on July 16, 1981.

To the amusement of the nearly 600 guests comprising government and opposition leaders at the newly-opened Renaissance Hotel, Mahathir confessed he was in two minds about attending the lunch for fear he might be seen as having stayed too long as head of government.

"In fact, I try to forget that I have been (prime minister) for 15 years. I worry people might say it's too long," he said, drawing laughter from the guests who included ministers, mentris besar, chief ministers and opposition party leaders.

Thanking the opposition party leaders who put political differences aside to honour him, Mahathir said: "We all should be grateful that in our country,

see page 2

1
25/7/80
9661 4/50
Dr Mahathir

Anwar says it with pantun

from page 1

people can still meet although there are differences.

"In some countries they physically fight when there is disagreement ... in Malaysia, we only fight with words."

The opposition leaders included DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang, Kelantan PAS commissioner and Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Nik Aziz Nik Mat, Parti Melayu Semangat 46 president Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Parti Bersatu Sabah president Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan.

Mahathir added the future of the nation will be bright if the attitude shown by all those present at the

lunch is continued.

In his speech, Anwar said government members and the people have only fondness and respect for Mahathir as the leader and prime minister who has succeeded in redeeming the dignity of Malaysians, restoring their confidence in themselves and kindle in them the will to pursue excellence.

He said the policies to transform the economy introduced by Mahathir over the past 15 years have gradually freed the country from dependence on the economic power of the developed countries.

Anwar said Mahathir has also emerged as the voice of developing countries which are still held in

the clutches of the unfair world economic system.

"A people will only become supreme if their leader possesses a supreme vision and the people are with him in achieving that supremacy," he said, adding that when Mahathir urged the people to make the vision a success, "the people are always ready, willing and able. I am one of the millions of people who believe in the vision."

"In fact, it was Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir and his vision which made me fully determined to join the government 14 years ago."

Expressing his personal gratitude to Mahathir, Anwar read out a pantun:

Kalau tidak kerana kila-luan, Tidak terlihat ikan

di kali; Kalau tidak kerana tuan, Mana mungkin saya di sini.

(Literal translation: If not for the flash, The fish in the brook will not be seen. If not for you, sir, Will I be here today?)

Anwar ended his brief speech with another pantun to express his loyalty and that of his government colleagues.

Angkut-angkut terbang ke langit, Mati disambar anak merbah, Tertangkap bumi dengan langit, Setia kita tidak akan berubah.

(Literal translation: Bees soar to the sky, One is brought down by a baby merbah (bird), Heaven and earth may collide, But our loyalty will never diminish).