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Dr M: My absence a likely factor

BY CELESTE FONG

KUALA LUMPUR: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad listed his retirement from politics as one of the possible reasons for Barisan Nasional's landslide victory in the just-concluded general election.

"Maybe because I did not continue. It has come to a time that the country needs a new leadership," said the former Prime Minister when listing the factors for Barisan's outstanding performance.

He said Barisan not only maintained its two-thirds majority but its exceptional performance saw the coalition bagging a 90% victory.

Other possible factors were the new leadership under Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and the role of Puteri Umno, he said.

He added that PAS was playing on outdated issues and there were no national issues for the opposition to exploit.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at Umno Cheras division's 10th anniversary celebration at Mutiara Hotel here last night.

Also present at the function were Dr Mahathir's wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Umno Cheras division chief Senator Datuk Syed Ali Al-Habshee and Umno Federal Territory division chief Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor.



ON RECORD: Dr Mahathir reading the Special Edition of Umno Cheras Bulletin, to commemorate the division's 10th anniversary, at the dinner in Kuala Lumpur last night.

On Umno's performance in Kedah, he said Puteri's victory in Kedah would help strengthen the party.

Dr Mahathir said Umno must continue to remain relevant to the needs of the people and the country.

Many political parties in other countries, which were formed years before Umno, had

become unpopular and resulted in their demise, he said.

However, Umno had remained popular even after Independence.

Reminding people about the importance of power sharing in the country, Dr Mahathir said the support of other races had also helped secure victory for Umno and Barisan.