

0009MST 30 03 85

Mahathir to stress on need for Umno unity

By MARIA SAMAD

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is expected to stress on the need to maintain party unity at the Umno Supreme Council meeting here tomorrow.

Dr Mahathir is expected to point out that Umno could ill-afford any disunity, especially now when the general election is likely to be held soon.

The Prime Minister, who is also Barisan Nasional chairman, added fuel to speculation that the election would be held in August when he told Barisan party members in Kedah yesterday to prepare for the polls.

Dr Mahathir is expected to talk at great length at tomorrow's meeting on the need for party unity in view of the many fierce contests for top posts and

committee seats in several new Umno divisions.

Dr Mahathir has, since the directive was given to all Umno divisions to hold their elections following the recent delineation of parliamentary constituencies, reminded party members to abide by the party's constitution.

He has repeatedly stressed that such strict adherence was in keeping with the position of Umno as a party which forms the backbone of the Government and that members should set the example to other Barisan component parties.

He has also urged Umno divisions and branches not to change their leaders "just for the sake of changing" but to re-elect these leaders to enable them to serve out their term since they were only voted into their posts last year and would normally serve until next year.

Most of the Umno divisions are ex-

pected to hold their annual general meetings from early next week until middle of May.

In a meeting with heads of Umno divisions early last month, Dr Mahathir reminded them to be wise in choosing their leaders and ensure that the elections were carried out smoothly.

Tomorrow's meeting is also likely to hear details from each of the Umno State Liaison Committee chiefs on the preparations for the general election in their respective States.

Dr Mahathir has privately been briefed on this by some of the State Umno leaders during his recent visits to the States but is likely to be given a detailed briefing tomorrow.

Sources said that he is also expected to brief his colleagues on the Sabah election and urge Umno leaders to go to the State and help the ruling Berjaya in the campaign.