

PM 'announces' date for the general election

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MALACCA, Sat. — The Prime Minister announced the date for the general election here today.

"The elections will be held on the date of the elections," he told delegates to the 33rd MIC general assembly amidst laughter.

Earlier, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who was in a buoyant mood, said in a prelude to his official address:

"I would like to announce the date of the elections here," and this was greeted by thunderous applause by both MIC officials and delegates who, for a moment, really thought that the

Prime Minister was serious.

However, as it turned out Dr Mahathir was merely making some light-hearted comments in response to the presidential address and preparing his audience for a more serious speech to come.

Datuk Samy Vellu had said that the entire nation was awaiting the announcement of the date for the general election which the Prime Minister was continuing "to play close to his chest."

Having "announced" the date for the election, Dr Mahathir went on to explain how speculation of an impending general election had come about.

He said it was because he had been constantly reminding Umno members to prepare for elections.

"Last year, 1984 and even towards the beginning of 1983, there were people who projected that we were going to hold the elections soon."

"We already had one election in 1982 and after one-and-a-half years to two years in power, some people thought we were going to hold an election as if an election is something we play around with.

"There is really no reason for an election.

"They concluded that there would be an election soon simply because I urge Umno to be ready for an election and they took this as an indication that an election was going to be held soon.

"The reason I asked Umno to be ready for an election is our habit of working hard only when elections are around.

"If you don't visit your constituencies during ordinary times, the moment you are told that the elections are going to be held, you will hurry back to your constituents and ask them what they want.

"That was why I ask Umno to always be ready for elections. We want

them to work very hard.

"Unfortunately, they worked too hard. They worked too hard in trying to ensure that they are considered as candidates and that has caused us a lot of problems."

Referring to Datuk Samy Vellu's request for more State and parliamentary seats for the MIC in the next general election, the Prime Minister reminded the Malaysian Indian community that in addition to its disadvantage of being a small community, it was also spread over a wide area.

There was not a single constituency in the country that could be regarded as Indian-dominated and therefore the Barisan Nasional faced opposition from other component parties which had greater racial representation in the constituencies when it came to the allocation of seats to the MIC.

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Dr Mahathir, therefore, advised the MIC to also accept constituencies where the chances of a Barisan Nasional victory were not assured.

"It is the Barisan Nasional policy to contest all seats and sometimes the seats where the chances are not so good can be nursed and our hopes of winning improved the next time around," he said.

Dr Mahathir also pointed out that there was a tendency among the Malaysian Indian community to vote for the Opposition if its candidate was an Indian contesting against a non-Indian Barisan Nasional candidate.

He cited one such instance where, he said, the thinking appeared to have been that it was better to have an extra Indian elected even if he was from the Opposition.

He hoped that such thinking would cease to prevail.