

PM: House cleaning a must before polls

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — The Barisan Nasional must put its house in order before it can go to the polls.

This was the message Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had for Umno grassroots leaders at a meeting today.

It is the responsibility of everyone in the component parties of the BN to explain the facts and to dispel rumours about the national political situa-

tion, he told them.

One of the first things to be set straight is the MCA crisis — which he said was no longer just an MCA crisis but a BN problem as well.

Dr Mahathir spoke of the need for a "strong and united MCA before the Barisan could go to the polls."

Umno secretary-general Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid said this when briefing newsmen on the meeting between the Prime Minister and

Umno division leaders. Also present were officers from the Community Development Department (Kemas) and the National Unity Bureau. Altogether about 1,800 people were present at the gathering.

He said Dr Mahathir explained to them the MCA situation, the decisions taken at yesterday's Supreme Council meeting, questions on Umno unity, the general elections and economic

issues among other matters.

The Prime Minister impressed upon the officers and Umno representatives to give the correct information to the people about the political situation in the country.

They were also told to present the "true facts" and help dispel rumours circulating on various issues.

Datuk Seri Sanusi noted that the MCA crisis was the main issue brought up during the question and answer session.

He pointed out that Umno members were generally concerned with the effects of the crisis on the Barisan.

However, there was no telling when the crisis would be solved and whether all wounds would be healed enough for the coalition to seek the mandate for another

term in the Government.

Mandate

On whether it was suggested that the Barisan could go to the polls a year after the MCA crisis was resolved, Datuk Seri Sanusi said: "The Prime Minister did not say one year.

"But it is logical to expect that after the MCA crisis is resolved, within the three-month period, time is needed for the wounds to be healed.

"So it depends on how deep the wounds are and how long it takes for the wounds to heal. If it takes one year to heal, then it is one year, but if it takes longer, well ..."

The MCA representatives, Datuk Mak Hon Kam and Datuk Dr Neo Yee Pan, told the Barisan Nasional Supreme Council at its meeting yesterday that the party would resolve its problems within three months.

If it did not do so within this self-imposed time limit, it would withdraw from the Barisan.

Datuk Seri Sanusi said Umno members did not suggest at today's meeting with Dr Mahathir that the MCA be expelled from the Barisan as one way of solving its crisis and softening the negative impact on the coalition.

"The MCA will know how to solve its own problem," he said.

He added that Umno members had full confidence in the Supreme Council and political bureau of Umno — as the backbone of the Barisan — to help solve the crisis.