

FULL TERM FOR GOVT?

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By MARIA SAMAD and
ZAINAL EPI

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — The Government appears to have ruled out the possibility of a snap general election early next year and now seems set to serve out almost its full term, which expires in April 1987.

If hints dropped by Prime Minister and Barisan Nasional chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday and today are any indication, the next general election is likely to be held in early 1987.

Sources said that Dr Mahathir, in briefing the Barisan supreme council at its meeting yesterday, told component party leaders that the coalition would require "at least one year" after the settlement of the MCA crisis to prepare for an election.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, is understood to have dropped the same hint at a meeting this morning in Parliament House with officers from Community Development (Kemas), Information Department and *Biro Tata Negara* in the Prime Minister's Department and Umno divisional leaders.

Umno secretary-general Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid told reporters after the three-and-a-half-hour meeting that Dr Mahathir had not specifically said that the next general election would be held in a year.

He added, however, that it would take time for the wounds to heal once the MCA crisis was solved.

"This depends on how deep the wound is and how long it will take to heal. If it takes one year to heal ... then it will take that period of time to heal, but it could also take more than a year," said Datuk Seri Sanusi.

He said Dr Mahathir reiterated

that Barisan needed a strong and united MCA to face the general election.

The MCA had agreed at yesterday's meeting to resolve its crisis within three months or voluntarily withdraw from the Barisan. The assurance was given by Datuk Dr Neo Yee Pan and Datuk Mak Hon Kam, both of whom the Barisan recognised as the MCA "representatives" to the meeting.

There had been speculation earlier this year that the Government would call a snap election either late this year or early next year.

Datuk Seri Sanusi, who is National and Rural Development Minister, said that Umno members expressed their full confidence in the decision of the Umno political bureau and the Barisan supreme council on the MCA issue.

"Most of the Umno members present are not interested in who should be the president of the MCA but in the effect the crisis

will have on the Barisan and the political stability of the country."

Dr Mahathir, he said, told them that the MCA crisis was "not (only) an MCA crisis but a problem in the Barisan."

Datuk Seri Sanusi said that among the issues raised was that of poison-pen letters discrediting the country's leaders.

Datuk Seri Sanusi said Dr Mahathir told those present to throw such letters into the waste-paper basket.

Dr Mahathir also briefed them on the country's political development, the economy and the wage claims by the civil servants.

He said the Prime Minister stressed that the Government could not possibly afford to meet the wage demand of the civil service unions.

Datuk Seri Sanusi said that the Prime Minister also expressed concern over the rampant practice of money politics among Umno members.