

PM: WE'RE READY FOR POLLS

DR M: UMNO
READY FOR
DIALOGUE
WITH PAS — P2

By KALIMULLAH HASSAN
and M. VEERA PANDIYAN

MASJID TANAH, Sun. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the situation in the country is very good and the Barisan Nasional is well prepared for an election.

"Everybody seems to be quite happy, despite the fact that there is some unemployment and problems.

"But generally, the parties (in

17 FEB 1986
the coalition) are well-run and well prepared for any eventuality," he said.

However, Dr Mahathir said the Barisan Nasional had not discussed any possible date for an election.

He was replying to reporters' questions about the discussions he had had with Barisan Nasional leaders during his nation-wide tour which has so far covered four States.

The Prime Minister's nation-wide tour which began with the visit to Negri Sembilan on Jan 23 is seen as a prelude to the general election, although the Government's term of office only expires in April next year.

He has since visited Kedah and Pahang. He arrived in Malacca yesterday for a two-day visit.

Dr Mahathir is scheduled to complete his tour with visits to Sabah and Sarawak in the first week of April.

In all the States he has visited, Dr Mahathir met State Barisan Nasional leaders for closed-door discussions.

He said today that the meetings were to brief Barisan Nasional leaders "on current events ... what is happening in the country and what component parties should do if there is an election."

However, pressed by reporters on whether a definite date was

discussed, he smiled and said: "I said IF. We have not fixed a date."

Earlier, Dr Mahathir was greeted by about a few thousand people when he went to open the Dewan Rakyat Masjid Tanah.

He told the gathering that the Barisan Nasional Government would ensure fairness to all communities and that all the country's resources were ploughed back for the people's benefit.

"We do not want to remain as Prime Minister or Ministers forever. Prime Ministers come and go but the Government must remain to ensure continued development and progress for the country," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Alliance, under Tunku Abdul Rahman, and later the Barisan Nasional had brought vast development to the people, especially in the rural areas.

"Under colonial rule, all our riches were siphoned off. There was development only where it benefited the colonial masters.

"Through our struggle, we achieved independence but this would be meaningless if we had an irresponsible government," he said.

Dr Mahathir said many independent countries did not have development because their people could not elect a responsible government.

"Our government is responsible and our interest is in the welfare of the people.

"Our success can be judged by the standard of living we enjoy now," he said.