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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. —  
Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir  
Mohamad winds up a suc-  
cessful nation wide tour  
which began in January  
with a visit to Labuan to-  
morrow.

During his two-month  
whirlwind visit to the  
States, the Prime Minister  
and Barisan Nasional chair-  
man managed to resolve or  
give assurances on most of  
the major issues which, in  
an election, would have  
been used against the coal-  
ition by opposition parties.

Dr Mahathir said on Fri-  
day that the purpose of his  
tour was to assess the Bari-  
san strength and its pre-  
paredness for a general  
election.

And on his visits he has  
spoken on subjects which  
many people think are indi-  
cative of an "election cam-  
paign."

Dr Mahathir assured that  
the Government will:

- NOT oppress other  
races;

- NOT curb other lan-  
guages;

- ALLOW vernacular  
schools to continue operat-  
ing;

- REVIEW the contro-  
versial Section 21 (ii) of the  
Education Act;

- WORK out a solution to  
the Bukit China issue;

- PROVIDE more job op-  
portunities despite the re-  
cession;

- PROVIDE \$30 million  
for petty traders; and

- ALLOW the Sabah elec-  
tions to go on for a solution  
to the State's political cri-  
sis.

He also used the tour plat-  
form to defend government  
policies and criticise the  
two main opposition parties  
in the country — PAS and  
DAP.

Dr Mahathir also ap-  
pealed for unity and har-

# HOW EFFECTIVE IS MAHATHIR'S TOUR?

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mony and warned that if the  
people were taken in by op-  
position parties' divisive  
tactics, the country and  
people would suffer.

If gauged from the public  
response his visits attract-  
ed, the tour was enormously  
successful and even Dr Ma-  
hathir said last week that  
his assessment showed the  
Barisan parties are ready to  
face an election anytime.

In each State he visited,  
Dr Mahathir held closed  
door meetings with the  
Barisan parties and dealt  
with the problems affecting  
them.

For example, in Penang,  
he dealt with the tacky sub-  
ject of the State's next  
Chief Minister by telling  
Umno members not to make  
an issue out of this.

At the same time, he told  
Gerakan leaders not to take  
the issue of seats and the  
Chief Minister's post to the  
public forum and instead  
settle it within party chan-  
nels.

The Gerakan had threat-  
ened to contest under its  
own banner if it was not  
given 14 seats to contest.  
And it has been adamant  
that the next Chief Minister  
should come from the par-  
ty.

Similarly, in Kelantan,  
sources said Dr Mahathir  
told the faction-ridden

towards solving their inter-  
nal problems, the Opposi-  
tion problem still looms  
above their heads.

Dr Mahathir has said in  
practically every State that  
PAS practises deviationist  
teachings and a vote for the  
party is a vote for extrem-  
ism and unrest.

He also warned against  
the DAP's line of campaign-  
ing by exploiting sensitive  
issues and creating discord  
among the different races.

But the DAP and PAS  
have not let down on their  
campaign either. If Dr Ma-  
hathir has managed to get  
his message across to the  
masses, the two opposition  
parties have also done their  
utmost to ensure that they  
get their message across.

Undoubtedly, Dr Mahathir's  
tour has, besides tying  
up loose ends within the co-  
alition, swayed some sup-  
port for the Barisan with  
the solutions offered on is-  
sues.

But the sources said in  
the case of PAS, for exam-  
ple, it will take more than a  
tongue-lashing and criti-  
cisms of the party to make  
its supporters switch sides.

"Dr Mahathir's criticisms  
and revelations about PAS  
have given non-Muslims a  
clearer picture of his views  
on the party. If anyone  
wanted to support PAS as a

protest against the Barisan,  
they would have to weigh  
their decision very careful-  
ly now.

"But for the Muslim sup-  
porters, it will take much  
more groundwork to con-  
vince them otherwise," the  
sources said.

They said while one ma-  
jor theme on Dr Mahathir's  
visits was the need for ra-  
cial unity and harmony in  
relation to the DAP's racial  
brand of politics, the DAP's  
support may not necessar-  
ily come from those who  
agreed with its ideologies.

"The Barisan Nasional  
realises that there is a  
growing feeling, especially  
in urban areas, of disaffec-  
tion against the coalition for  
certain government policies  
and actions, not least of all  
the BMF scandal.

"These people might not  
be convinced by the Gov-  
ernment's explanations and  
for want of a better party to  
support, they might vote for  
the DAP in protest," the  
sources said.

They said the concessions  
made by Dr Mahathir, such  
as those on Chinese educa-  
tion, Bukit China and more  
employment opportunities,  
have to a certain extent  
generated support for the  
Barisan in general and the  
MCA and Gerakan in parti-  
cular.

"But it is too soon to say  
whether this is enough,"  
they said.

The Barisan is also faced  
with another problem — the  
resignation of Datuk Musa  
Hitam as Deputy Prime  
Minister.

Opposition parties are  
having a heyday in using  
Datuk Musa's resignation  
as an issue.

In the Barisan itself, this  
issue is not much discussed  
because it is viewed more  
as an Umno problem.

And although Datuk Musa  
has returned here to cam-  
paign for the Barisan, his  
resignation will undoubtedly  
have some effect.

It is a tradition in Umno  
that members always close  
ranks in the face of outside  
threat. In an election, the  
Datuk Musa issue could  
well be set aside to be set-  
tled within party channels  
and members would con-  
centrate on an Umno and  
Barisan victory.

In a nutshell, Dr Mahathir's  
tour has seen a closing  
of ranks within Barisan  
component parties. And the  
issues he has addressed  
have done the Barisan a lot  
of good.

But in the final analysis,  
whether this is enough to  
win an election will be de-  
cided at the polls — when-  
ever it is held.