

—Dr M explains decision to call election—

THE Government has called for a general election now to put an end to all sorts of rumours so that it can settle down to the business of running the country, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

"Until this election is over, the people cannot settle down to do anything.

"They have been thinking about the election all this while. It is a syndrome that we must get rid of," he told a news conference after chairing a Barisan

Nasional supreme council meeting.

"We do not want the people to go on talking and speculating about the election, and depressing the stock market with this talk," he added.

Asked why the Government chose this time to hold the election, Dr Mahathir replied: "We believe this is the best time for the BN to win."

He declined to elaborate when pressed for further details about the factors influencing the BN to choose August 3 for the election.

"The Government has its own calculation. We have some secret reason," he said.

Asked why the election is being held during the haj season, Dr Mahathir replied that those performing the haj this year are about 25,000 people of some seven million voters.

Also, there are some people who cannot cast their votes for their own reasons but this should not be used as an argument for deciding the date of the election.

The people will otherwise

think that the election cannot be held during the haj season or when there are some marriage ceremonies going on or that it must be held during school holidays, he added.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said the Umno general assembly for this year scheduled to begin on July 30 will be postponed, but a new date has not been fixed. The Umno constitution says that the assembly must be held by December of every year.

According to the Prime Minis-

ter, Bills that have been tabled in the Dewan Rakyat for first reading will lapse while those that have not gone for first reading will have to be presented in the first session of the new Parliament after the election.

Dr Mahathir said he will seek re-election in his present constituency (Kubang Pasu-Kedah) and anyone who wishes to challenge him must go to that seat. "Unlike Mr Lim Kit Siang, I never run away from my constituency," he said.