

(P)
THE roads flood when it rains in Kampung Datuk Keramat.

It is not much fun walking in the rain here. Even children, who enjoy splashing in the water after the rain has stopped, do not like being splashed by cars using the rather congested road.

Yesterday, just before 3pm, the dark clouds which had been gathering since noon broke but dozens of children and hundreds of adults walked about drenched to the skin. Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was coming to lay the foundation stone for the new Datuk Keramat market.

Dr Mahathir arrived at 3pm sharp. Like everyone else, he was not spared by the rain despite the barrage of umbrellas which surrounded him and his entourage.

Like everyone else, the rising water got into his shoes.

But the campaign must go on.

The beats of the kompang and the thunder were not enough to drown the children's chantings of *Hidup Mahathir, Hidup Mahathir*.

After trudging through the overflowing waters from the drains, Dr Mahathir was invited onto the stage right in the middle of the market place.

Save the hardy youngsters and children, most of the others sought refuge in the nearby stalls. But the VIPs on stage were not much luckier than those in the open space — the wind kept blowing the rain onto them.

And when the beat on the zinc roofings prevented those sheltering under the stalls from hearing the campaign speeches, they too moved out nearer the stage.

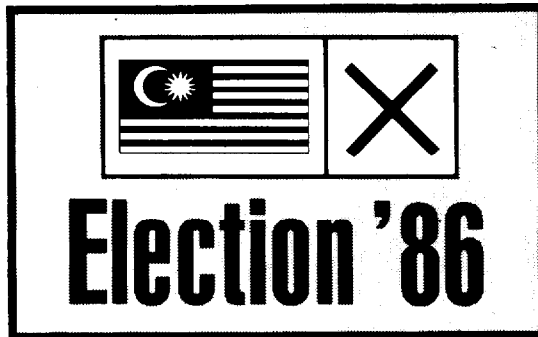
Dr Mahathir's campaign, which began on Thursday, has taken him to the troubled areas in four States.

The weather has not been all that bad as it was yesterday. In Alor Star and Bahau where Dr Mahathir went on Thursday and Friday, it was extremely hot and humid.

The campaign so far has been very hectic and while the election is a serious matter of the day, there have been many a light incident.

At Felda Palong Lima, Negri Sembilan, on Friday, the temperature could not have been less than 34 degrees Celsius. But Dr Mahathir, despite the long sleeved bush jacket and the Barisan Nasional cap, appeared un-

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perturbed.

Halfway through his speech, however, Dr Mahathir took off his cap. The television crewmen sighed. It would be a tough job editing the highlights to show Dr Mahathir speaking at the same function — at some stages wearing a cap and at some, bare headed.

In Palong, after the speech ended, Dr Mahathir, surrounded by a cordon of aides and bodyguards, was ushered through to a clinic he was to declare open.

In the rush, Dr Siti Hasnah was left behind and it was only five minutes later that someone realised she was missing.

One man shouted from the back "Bagi jalan. Datin nak lalu." (Give way. Datin wants to pass).

The crowd parted. Just as she moved on, another shout came: "Bagi jalan. Yang Berhormat nak lalu."

The crowd parted again and a settler, grinning from ear to ear, tried to pass through. The crowd recognised the *Yang Berhormat* and closed in again and the settler sheepishly fell back.

Palong was the second stop on the Mahathir campaign trail.

Yesterday morning, Dr Mahathir went to Klang where the Barisan candidates are being challenged by the DAP. He was scheduled to arrive at 9am.

But he arrived at 8.35am. The VIPs were still not around.

Selangor Mentri Besar Datuk Ahmad Razali Ali came closely behind looking flustered, asking aides: "Where's the PM?"

Ten minutes later, one of the candidates arrived and stopped to shake hands with all standing near the main stand. Dr Mahathir was talking with some bystanders on the other side.

"You are early," the aspiring *Yang Berhormat* told the people nearest him.

"No, sir. You are late. The PM is already here," replied one, sending the candidate scurrying to the other side.

After Klang, Dr Mahathir proceeded to Damansara Jaya where he opened a school.