

No early polls, says Dr M

By K. BALA and MANAN OSMAN

MARANG, Thurs. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today ruled out an early general election as speculated by certain quarters who interpreted the Loyalty With The People Movement (Semarak) gatherings as a sign of impending polls.

The Prime Minister said some people believed that the meetings between the people and leaders were preparations for elections.

Saying that this was not true, he added that the Barisan Nasional wanted to maintain close links with the people at all time unlike certain people who only did so during elections.

He was launching the Terengganu-level Semarak at Kampung Kelulut, a fishing village 25km from Kuala Terengganu, which was attended by thousands of people from all over the State.

Dr Mahathir also invited all Malays to join Umno Baru irrespective of whether they were members of the deregistered Umno or new faces.

This was important as Umno Baru was the only party that could effectively protect and promote the interests of the Malays, besides caring for the well-being of the non-Malays.

Image

Dr Mahathir, who is the Umno Baru president, said the doors were open to all Malays except those who wanted to join to disrupt the party.

Umno Baru, he said, was the same in spirit and set-up as the de-registered Umno.

It was important for Umno Baru to continue to be the backbone of the Government

to promote development for the benefit of all the people.

"While Umno Baru struggles for the Malays, it also protects the rights of all the other races.

"We are moderate in our approach and willing to defend other races as long as they do not oppose us," he said.

The Prime Minister repeated his criticism of a group that was damaging Malaysia's image abroad for their personal interests.

They portrayed the country as being unstable with a weak Government, which frightened investors.

Describing these people as unpatriotic, he commented: "What are their reasons for doing this. If they truly love the country, they should not do this.

"Even if things are bad, a patriot will defend and praise the country while they are abroad."