

— Mahathir rules out snap election

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DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad ruled out yesterday 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 believe that the meetings between the people and leaders are preparations for elections.

Saying that this is not true, he added that the Barisan Nasional wants to maintain close links with the people at all times unlike certain people who only do so during elections.

He was launching the Terengganu level Semarak at Kampung Kelulut, a fishing village 25 km from Kuala Terengganu. It 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 is important as Umno Baru is the only party that can effectively protect and promote the interests of the Malays besides caring for the well being of the non-Malays.

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

Umno Baru, he said, is the same in spirit and set-up as the deregistered Umno.

It is 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 again criticised a group which was damaging Malaysia's image overseas, for their own interest.

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 abroad."

— NST