

# CLIMATE IS RIGHT: PM

By Wong Sai Wan

SEREMBAN, Sat. — The next general election can be held anytime now and the Barisan Nasional is confident it will win convincingly, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"The economy has improved and the political situation is peaceful. The conditions are getting better and in this climate I am sure we will win," the Prime Minister said.

"With the current climate, we can win easily ... whether we have a general election now or just before April 1991 (when the Government's term expires)," Dr Mahathir told reporters after opening the Umno Jelebu delegates meeting in Kuala Kelawang.

Dr Mahathir said "we had worse conditions in 1986 and everyone said we would lose but we won with the biggest ever majority."

He declined to say whether he would call for an early general election.

According to *Bernama*, Dr Mahathir had earlier told a gathering of 8,000 people at the Jelebu district council padang that Malaysians must not isolate themselves from one another just because their views differed.

Resorting to isolation because of divergent views would not only undermine racial unity but also divide existing organisations, Dr Mahathir said, adding that racial unity should be nurtured through discussion and this approach must be perpetuated.

Dr Mahathir described the country's development as unique when compared with other nations which had gained independence at about the same time as Malaysia.

He said the people were more mature now and continued to elect a responsible government to realise their aspirations at every general election.

Dr Mahathir and his wife, who arrived for their first visit here, were given a traditional-style welcome by people of various races.

He laid the foundation stone for a

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~~cone-shaped white marble~~ structure at the Kuala Kelawang water fountain to commemorate his visit, before releasing balloons bearing the Barisan Nasional symbol.

The Umno president then opened the Jelehu division delegates meeting.

In his opening address, Dr Mahathir said that although he had advocated for no contests for the division chairman's posts this did not mean that there was no democracy in the party.

"What we want is to avoid such contests at present because such contests would split the party," Dr Mahathir said.

"The spirit of no-contest would only serve to strengthen the party and allow the leaders to concentrate on developing the country," he added.

Dr Mahathir urged the people of Jelebu, whose MP Datuk Rais Yatim is a leader of Semangat 46, not to be tricked by the group.

"The majority of the old Umno members have rejoined Umno. Therefore those who stayed out are the minority. As the minority, they should accede to the wishes of the majority," he said.

Dr Mahathir warned that although this group might not be able to win elections, they could act as "spoilers" and force seats to fall to other opposition parties as it did in Teluk Pasu.

He added that the Semangat leaders had promised as many as 40 people that they would be made Mentris Besar when there were only nine such positions.

Dr Mahathir later proceeded to Kuala Lipis, Pahang, where he opened the Lipis Umno delegates conference.

**Harpajan Singh** reports that Dr Mahathir told the delegates the party was prepared to co-operate with Semangat members for the sake of Malay unity.

"We do not hold any grudges against them and Umno is prepared to accept them or even work with them for the good of the nation. But Semangat 46 leaders have betrayed Umno by spending money to ensure the party's defeat in the Teluk Pasu by-election just because they are dissatisfied that their personal ambitions were not fulfilled," he said.

"It is sad that they have turned against Umno. Without Umno, they would not have been known as leaders," he added.