

Umno leaders set for whirlwind State tours

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Umno branch meetings will be held in June and the party's supreme council members including Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will set off on a whirlwind tour of the country after Hari Raya Puasa at the end of the month.

Dr Mahathir said he would begin his tour with visits to Kelantan, Terengganu, Perak and Pahang. "I may also visit other States," he added.

The situation in Kelantan was not as bad for the Barisan Nasional as has been portrayed by some quarters, he said, adding that Umno intended to concentrate on all States.

"Encik Ghafar Baba and

other Umno supreme council members will have their own schedule of visits," he said after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting today.

"We intend to have meetings and dialogues with Umno members and will also meet Barisan Nasional members, supporters and the people.

"We will be visiting all areas, including those where Umno is not contesting in the next general election."

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said the supreme council would fix the dates for the divisional meetings and the Umno general assembly at a later date.

He also said a Barisan Nasional leaders' meeting

would be held on Thursday to discuss the present standing of all the component parties.

When asked whether the meeting had anything to do with the next general election, Dr Mahathir said: "Yes, it has everything to do with the election. Everything we do is construed as having something to do with the election so there is no point denying it."

To another question whether the Government was ready for the election, he said it was prepared at all times.

When pressed for a possible election date, he said it would definitely be held this year or next year. This reply brought a burst of laughter among those present. (The term of the pre-

sent Parliament ends next year.)

"Everybody wants to know when the election is, including some people who are not primitive and want the election soon," he said, in obvious reference to a controversial statement by former Lord President Tun Suffian Mohamed that Malaysian politicians tend to have a primitive mentality.

The supreme council also discussed the party's victory at Pantai Merdeka, he said, adding that there were weaknesses which the party hoped to address and overcome.

Dr Mahathir denied talk that Umno was behind the move to publish a new daily called *Malaysian Merdeka*.