

PM: Candidates must have these qualities

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(P)
KUANTAN, Tues. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has outlined the qualities candidates for the coming general election should have.

He said they must be free from problems, able to serve the country and party, experienced, popular and command the respect of the people.

"I don't know who they are. Who the candidates are is not important. They must be able to measure up to our expectations. They must fit the mould of a suitable candidate that I have in mind."

He said he had not done a full assessment of the State Assemblymen and Members of Parliament who would be dropped.

He was speaking to reporters after breaking fast at Menteri Besar Tan Sri Haji Khalil Yaakob's residence here tonight.

Earlier, the Prime Minister, who is also Umno president, held a two-hour closed-door meeting with the State Umno Youth at the Pahang Umno

building here.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, who is on the last leg of his pre-election tour, said his meetings with State Umno Youth leaders and members showed that they were fully prepared to face the coming general election.

"The election machinery of Umno Youth is in order. My visit is merely to explain to them the role they have to play."

Asked whether he had found any weaknesses during his tour, Dr Mahathir said all the States were well prepared, except for one State which was visited by his deputy, Encik Ghafar Baba.

He did not name the State but added that he was told by Encik Ghafar that the preparation by the Umno Youth for the election in that State was not up to expectation.

On the call by Pas Information chief Subky Latif urging Muslims not to perform the haj this year as they might not be able to take part in the general election, the Prime Minister

said this showed that the Pas leaders put politics above religion.

"We are not surprised by the call. This is their normal practice."

He said it was not only Pas members who performed the haj but also a lot of Umno members.

"For those performing the haj, this could very well turn out to be the last year. What if they are unable to go next year?" he asked.

Regarding a front page report in the *Nanyang Siang Pau* today which quoted sources close to the Prime Minister as saying that a snap general election could be held in view of the differences of opinion among the MCA leaders, Dr Mahathir said: "I am not aware of this. You must ask the newspaper concerned."

Dr Mahathir, who arrived at the airport this evening, was received by Tan Sri Haji Khalil, Umno Youth chief Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak, State Executive Council members and other State Barisan Nasional leaders.