

Bankrupts, those with criminal records out

# BN candidates

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# must be clean

BY NURAINA SAMAD

**KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Bankrupts and those with criminal records will not be allowed to represent the Barisan Nasional in the coming general election. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.**

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said the Barisan Nasional would ensure that its candidates were clean.

"It is the responsibility of each component party to ensure that its candidates are able to contest, otherwise on nomination day we will find that someone will make certain allegations against a certain candidate.

"The candidate will then be unable to stand in the election and his challenger will win unopposed," he said in reply to questions at a Press conference after chairing a three-hour Umno supreme council meeting at the party's headquarters here.

Dr Mahathir said the meeting today had a general discussion on preparations for the election.

It also discussed the position of the Opposition, which had consistently made predictions since 1987 on when the general election would be held.

He said Umno would continue with preparations for the election.

Dr Mahathir said a third round of visits would be carried out after he had returned from South Korea next week and after his Barisan unity visits to Sabah and Sarawak.

Dr Mahathir said in his third round of visits, he and Deputy Prime Minister Ghafar Baba would be meeting "target groups" separately.

These groups, he added, included various associations and chambers of commerce.

He said he would also ask the leaders of other Barisan component parties to meet these groups.

## Very complex

Dr Mahathir said the State Umno liaison committees had submitted their lists of candidates, and stressed that what they had submitted "were only lists . . . not the names of candidates".

He said the lists were for the council to study.

The Prime Minister said he also clarified to the council the Government's stand on the Gulf crisis.

"We are of the view that the situation there will be prolonged and cannot be resolved within a short period.

"It is very complex . . . one side does not want to withdraw and the other cannot attack . . . there is a stale-

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# Our BLR rates still low, says PM

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mate.”

He said Malaysia had to make preparations to overcome what the Government saw as a prolonged problem.

Replying to a question, he said preparations had to take into account the country's economic, trade and political ties with the Middle East, including Malaysia's stand in the United Nations.

“The Gulf crisis would affect, to say the least, the price of oil. While an increase will benefit us, as net exporters of oil, it will also cause hardship to both the rich and poor nations,” he said.

He said even the US faced the threat of a recession if it had to pay \$33 per barrel of oil.

This, he added, would in turn disrupt Malaysia's trade with the US.

He said any increase in the oil price should be reasonable and be done ‘slowly, little by little’.

On the decision by banks to increase the base lending rate, Dr Mahathir said this had nothing to do with developments in the Gulf.

He said there was some pressure to increase the BLR because the rates in the country were “quite low” compared with other countries.

He said the increase would not have an adverse effect on the banking industry or borrowers.

On reports in the Chinese Press that the Government had lifted restrictions for those intending to visit China, the Prime Minister said the age limit for applicants was still 30.

“We are not rigid. We normally allow people to visit China for medical reasons.”