

Dewan meets

April 10

By Farush Khan and Sao'dah Elias

SHAH ALAM, Sat. — The next session of Parliament will convene as scheduled on April 10 but the Dewan Rakyat can be dissolved anytime to allow for the general election, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"Whether the session will last (until May) or not, I do not know. I am still waiting for the inspiration," he said light-heartedly when approached by reporters after launching the *Rakan Muda Rekreasi* (Recreation) and *Rakan Muda Cinta Alam* (Nature Lovers) programmes at the Bukit Cahaya Seri Alam Agriculture Park.

Asked whether the Dewan Rakyat would commence its sitting as scheduled in the light of speculation that the general election was "very soon", Dr Mahathir said he hoped the sitting would proceed without any change.

Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar is scheduled to open the first meeting of the fifth session of the eighth Parliament on April 10.

The Dewan Rakyat will sit from April 11 followed by the Dewan Negara. The session ends on May 30.

Asked if the general election would be held in June, Dr Mahathir reiterated that he was still waiting for an inspiration and that he had yet to find the most suitable date.

On whether the Umno supreme council meeting scheduled for Saturday would be the last before the general election, Dr Mahathir, who is also party president said it was possible.

"That's nothing to be worried about. Everybody

is making preparations. In fact, Umno started its preparations long ago."

On whether the list of election candidates was ready, he said: "The checking is not over yet. We are still in the first stage. We are still studying the names of candidates submitted by the Menteri Besar based on proposals by the divisions."

Dr Mahathir said he had met with all Menteri Besar except those from Perak and Perlis and that he might meet them next week.

Asked to elaborate on his earlier statement that the Barisan Nasional might field non-party candidates, he said there had not been any proposal on the matter yet.

Asked to comment on rumours that former DAP leaders might be contesting on BN tickets, he said the Barisan was prepared to consider anyone who accepted the BN's concepts and struggle.

"We are open. We do not want to keep the Barisan to ourselves only."

Such candidates, he said, must, however, sign letters of acceptance of the Barisan's struggle before they could be considered.

Asked to comment on the possibility of the director of the Kelantan Religious Affairs Department, Wan Lokman Wan Ahmad, going on early retirement due to pressure by the State Government especially after the *khalwat* case involving Pas deputy youth chief Mohamad Sabu early this year, Dr Mahathir said it was possible.

"As we know, anyone supporting Umno and the Federal Government, including *imam* and *penghulu*, is being heavily pressured. Some of them have already been removed," he said.

He said a well-known religious figure who had many followers and who had given talks at the mosques had been rejected by Pas merely because he

had attended an Umno gathering.

In a Press statement yesterday, Wan Lokman said he was disappointed with Menteri Besar Datuk Nik

Aziz Nik Mat for disregarding the department while protecting Mohamad.