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Dr M: Situation now much better to hold election

Hardev Kaur in Khabarovsk (Russia)

WHILE Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has so far avoided saying when he will call for the general election, he dropped some hints here yesterday by saying that the situation now is "much better" than a few months ago to hold the election.

But he said he was still assessing the situation and asked Malaysians, who have been kept in suspense over the polling dates, to be patient.

"I'm still assessing the situation. I think the situation now is much better than a few months ago. People are now more knowledgeable about things but I have not decided yet," he told Malaysian journalists after attending a briefing at the office of Rimbunan Hijau, a Malaysian company which has logging concessions in this Far Eastern Russian region.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived here on Sunday night for a three-day visit, gave further hints on the polls when he said that although he would be attending a number of international conferences in the last quarter of the year, it did not mean that there would be no election this year.

Back home, journalists have consistently been asking the Prime Minister about the general election, but his standard answer has been: "We'll call the election when we think we should."

When asked whether he would attend the many international overseas conferences and meetings scheduled this year, he replied: "I shall attend. I am going to Africa for SAID (South African International Dialogue), the UN (General Assembly) and the Apec (summit)."

To another question, he said: "Obviously, if we call for election, I will not go."

SAID is scheduled to be held at Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe in October, while Apec in Auckland and the UN General Assembly are scheduled to be convened next month. The last time Dr Mahathir attended the UN General Assembly was in 1996.

In addition, the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting will be held in South Africa in October.

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