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# PM: Strong economic growth lifting nation's mood

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia's strong economic growth and the good showing at the SEA Games are lifting the mood among Malaysians, said Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

The Prime Minister was however tight-lipped on whether these positive indicators would prompt him to call the 14th general election (GE14) anytime soon.

"With this positive atmosphere, I hope it will reflect a growing confidence among the rakyat that what we have been doing is taking the

country to a better place and that we are meeting the people's aspirations," Najib, who is Umno president, told a media conference after chairing the party's supreme council meeting here yesterday.

Najib said Malaysia chalked up an impressive 5.8% Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in the second quarter of this year, bringing the first half growth figure to 5.7%.

He noted that consumer sentiment was improving and Bank Negara Malaysia's international reserves have grown to more than US\$100bil (RM428bil).

Najib said the feel-good factor

among the rakyat is also being boosted by the outstanding performance of Malaysia's SEA Games athletes.

He announced that Umno will hold its general assembly this year from Dec 5-9, but noted that this did not mean that GE14 could not be held this year.

Asked about a report in *The Star* yesterday quoting Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi saying that Umno and most Barisan Nasional component parties had submitted their shortlist of candidates, Najib said the vetting process was an ongoing exercise and the general election could be

held anytime.

"In fact, if there is a general election during the coming Umno assembly, we can just suspend the assembly," said Najib.

The Government's five-year term expires on June 24 next year, and a general election must be held within 60 days after the dissolution of the Dewan Rakyat.

On the proposal by some parties for a Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Memali incident, Najib said the Government was still considering the matter.

"We do not reject the possibility, but it must bring us benefit and

allow us to know the facts and truth," he said.

Najib also announced that Malaysia is the first country chosen by Saudi Arabia for its Haj pre-clearance programme.

Under the programme, Malaysian Haj pilgrims will undergo arrival immigration and customs clearance at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport, before departing to Saudi Arabia.

The programme, which would be implemented for the last seven Haj flights from Malaysia to Saudi Arabia for this current Haj season, would be launched by Dr Ahmad Zahid.

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