

Election panel to decide on

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# Parliament

By Sabry Sharif and K.H. Lim

**KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs.** — The Prime Minister today announced that the Dewan Rakyat will be dissolved tomorrow to pave way for the country's eighth general election since independence.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Azlan Shah had given his consent to the dissolution.

He added that he had instructed all Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers in Peninsular Malaysia to take the necessary steps to have their respective State Assemblies dissolved tomorrow for parliamentary and State elections to be held simultaneously.

The Election Commission will meet in Ipoh tomorrow to decide on nomination and polling dates after it had been informed of the dissolution of the Dewan Rakyat and the 11 State Assemblies today.

Dr Mahathir announced the dissolution after chairing a meeting of heads of component parties of the Barisan Nasional at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

The consent of the Rulers or Governors has already been obtained for all States except Kelantan where an audience with the Sultan has been fixed for tomorrow.

The Prime Minister said he obtained the Yang di-Pertuan Agong's consent to dissolve Parliament before the King went overseas.

Dr Mahathir, who is Barisan Nasional chairman, expressed confidence that the ruling coalition will be returned with two-thirds majority.

"We believe we can get two-thirds. This is important. If we don't, we will not have a strong Government and there will be political upheaval.

"There will be no stability and this will not be a healthy situation for the country."

He was responding to a question whether the Barisan Nasional would repeat its record-breaking landslide victory in 1986.

According to the Federal Constitution, a general election should be held within 60 days from the date of the dissolution of the Dewan Rakyat.

A similar provision is contained in the various State Constitutions in respect of general elections to the State Legislative Assemblies except that for the State Assemblies of Sabah and Sarawak in which the respective State Constitutions provide for elections to be held within 90 days from the date of dissolution.

The Federal and State Constitutions provide that Parliament and the State Legislative Assemblies, unless sooner dissolved, will stand dissolved at the end of five years from the date of their first meetings after the general elections.

A total of 8.2 million Malaysians will be eligible to vote in this general election, the eighth after Independence. At stake are 180 parliamentary seats and 351 State Assembly seats. Three new parliamentary seats have been created in Sarawak to bring the total to 180.

A breakdown of the parliamentary seats are Perlis (two), Kedah (14), Penang (11), Perak (23), Selangor (14), Negri Sembilan (seven), Malacca (five), Johor (18), Pahang (10), Terengganu (eight), Kelantan (13), Sarawak (27), Sabah (20), Kuala Lumpur Federal Territory (seven) and Labuan Federal Territory (one).

The term of the current Parliament expires in October next year.

In the 1986 general election, nine political parties vied for 177 seats to the Dewan Rakyat. Only candidates from three political parties, namely, the Barisan Nasional, Pas and DAP were successful.

Out of 52 independent candidates, only four were successful.

For the State Legislative Assembly elections, seven political parties contested the 351 seats.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the Prime Minister had chosen the "right time" to call for elections.

"The country is now in a very pro-Barisan mood," he said.

Asked at the Press conference whether the timing of the election would affect the presentation of the 1991 Budget, Dr Mahathir said that it

polls dates today

# dissolves

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would not be so.

The Budget was originally scheduled to be tabled on Oct 26 and he said it would make the Government more popular.

Asked whether public rallies will be allowed, he said it was up to the police and he understood the police were not keen.

Dr Mahathir said the regulations stipulated that the campaign could be any period between seven days and six weeks.

However, he later hinted at a short campaign when he said election observers from the Commonwealth Secretariat who had been invited for the election had been informed to be prepared for a short campaign.

"We have informed (Commonwealth Secretary-General) Chief Emeka Anyaoku that election campaigns in Malaysia are short, maybe only two weeks.

"And he must make preparations for a general election which is brief. So he has to take the shortest scenario," he said.

On his scheduled visit to Sabah and Sarawak next week, he said it was still on but the dates would have to be changed.

Heads of all component parties attended today's two-hour meeting except for Gerakan and MIC which were represented by deputy president Kerk Choo Ting and secretary-general Datuk G. Vadiveloo.