

# PM CALLS FOR POLLS

● Parliament to be dissolved today ● Observers

By Wong Chun Wai and Zulkifli Talib

**KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — The Dewan Rakyat and state assemblies in the peninsula will be dissolved tomorrow to pave the way for simultaneous national and state elections.**

The Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Sultan Azlan Shah, has consented to the dissolution of the Dewan Rakyat while the Mentris Besar and Chief Ministers are to get the assent of their Rulers for dissolving the assemblies.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the royal assent for dissolving the Dewan Rakyat was given "before the King left the country."

The Prime Minister declined to say when, but it is understood the audience took place on Tuesday, before the King left to watch the Beijing Asian Games.

Dr Mahathir made the announcement after chairing a two-hour meeting of Barisan Nasional leaders at the Umno headquarters here.

He first told the press conference that the meeting discussed three topics. One concerned preparations for the general election, and the second was the Barisan manifesto.

"As for the third matter, I have an announcement to make," he said.

Catching the newsmen by surprise, he continued: "I wish to announce that the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Azlan Shah has consented to the dissolution of the seventh Parliament on Oct 5.

"I will be advising all Mentris Besar and Chief Ministers in Peninsular Malaysia to take the appropriate action for their state legislative assemblies to be dissolved on the same day, so that the elections can be held simultaneously."

Dr Mahathir said the Election Commission would fix the dates for nomina-

tions and polling. <sup>S 5/10/90</sup>  
It would also decide on how long the campaigning period would be, he said.

"According to regulations, the campaigning period is from between seven and eight days to six weeks. It is for the commission to decide," he added.

Dr Mahathir, however, indicated that he did not expect the campaigning period to be long. He said he had informed the Commonwealth observers team to "prepare for the shortest scenario."

He said he told the Commonwealth secretary-general that elections in Malaysia were a short affair, and they could expect "possibly only about two weeks" between nominations and polling.

"We have invited the Commonwealth observers. The Commonwealth secretariat has written to all political parties, but I do not know whether those in the opposition have received the letters or have agreed to their presence," he added.

He also said the police would decide on whether public rallies would be allowed, but he understood that "they are not so keen" on such gatherings.

The dissolution of the Dewan Rakyat means that the tabling of the Budget for 1991, which was scheduled for Oct 26, will be postponed.

"It is a very attractive Budget (if tabled before the election). It would enhance our popularity," Dr Mahathir said, with a smile.

In any case, he said, the Barisan was confident of retaining its two-thirds majority in the Dewan Rakyat.

In 1986, the Barisan won 148 of the 177 parliamentary seats. The DAP won 24, and PAS one. The remaining four seats went to Independents.

The Barisan total was later reduced to 133 because of defections. Twelve joined Semangat 46, one the All Malaysia Indian United Front, and one Permas. Hamim, with a solitary MP, has left the Barisan.

This time round, 180 parliamentary seats will be at stake. The three new constituencies are in Sarawak.