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Opposition to contest all seats

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Barisan Nasional will be challenged in all parliamentary seats on the Peninsula by candidates from the Alternative Front.

Component party leaders expressed some grievances at the timing of Parliament's dissolution, mainly that it was dissolved before getting the Dewan Rakyat's approval for next year's Budget.

What they said:

* Lim Kit Siang (DAP secretary-general, speaking to reporters in Parliament before the dissolution announcement): "The Alternative Front is determined not to allow the BN to win any seat uncontested as in previous elections. We plan to have a one-on-one fight with BN in all the State seats. DAP is as prepared as can be.

"A dissolution of Parliament in mid-session when there is no constitutional or political crisis is outrageous and scandalous. If Parliament is dissolved today, it will be a last-minute decision by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who had clearly leaned towards having the general election next January.

"He is caught on the one hand by the need to have more time to win back public support, especially from the Malays, and on the other by the fear of the new 1999 electoral roll with its new 650,000 voters."

* Datuk Fadzil Mohd Noor (Pas president): "The timing of the elections was meant to prevent 650,000 new voters, who would only be eligible to vote after January next year, from exercising their rights.

"Pas is also not surprised about the last minute cancellation by the Prime Minister of his trip to the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in South Africa.

"We have received information that Dr Mahathir cancelled his trip at the last minute because he did not want to be embarrassed by a motion to condemn Malaysia's judicial system.

"The motion would be presented by a foreign country with the support of member countries."

* Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat (Kelantan Menteri Besar): "Pas' machinery is well-prepared to face the general election. I'll also be going to other States to help in the campaign.

* Dr Chandra Muzaffar (Parti Keadilan Nasional deputy president): "The BN is being irresponsible in dissolving Parliament before the Dewan Rakyat has approved next year's Budget. It also indicates a lack of sincerity on the part of BN.

"Keadilan hopes the Election Commission will ensure that the coming general election will be the cleanest election in Malaysian history. The BN should not be allowed to abuse the State machinery for electoral purposes or to monopolise the public media or to indulge in money politics.

"For our part, Keadilan will try to adhere to the highest ethical standards in this election campaign.

"Keadilan and the other Alternative Front parties would like the mainstream print and electronic media to give fair and equitable coverage to all parties in the election - the media should not allow itself to be used by the BN to smear and scandalise the Alternative Front."

* Dr Syed Husin Ali (president of Parti Rakyat Malaysia): "The time we have waited for has come, but Parliament should have been dissolved

earlier.

"We hope there is a promise from the Government for the election to be fair and clean.

"The Alternative Front have long been co-operating closely."

"We believe that our performance this year will be better, even though there are problems. We don't hope to win but to reduce the two-thirds majority."

* Dr Patau Rubis (president of the Sarawak-based party Star): "Since we want to deny the BN from winning any seat uncontested. I will be contacting the leaders of Sarawak Keadilan and Sarawak DAP to finalise the candidates in a day or two."

* Wong Ho Leng (Sarawak DAP publicity chief): "The dissolution was unthinkable, unprecedented and shocking since it was done while Parliament was still debating the 2000 Budget. Sarawak DAP has named five of its seven candidates to contest in the election. They are Chong Chieng Jen (Bandar Kuching), Voon Lee Shan (Stampin), Michael Tiang (Sarikei), Chew Chiu Sing (Bintulu) and Dr Yi Siu Kee (Miri)."

(END)