

23/10/1999

Opposition seeks three-week campaign period

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The Opposition today requested the Election Commission to allow at least a three-week campaigning period for the coming general election.

They said as the Commission had the jurisdiction to decide on the length of the campaigning period, they hoped their request would be met.

Speaking to reporters after a two-hour meeting with the Commission chairman Datuk Wan Ahmad Wan Omar and Commission members, Parti Rakyat Malaysia president Dr Syed Husin Ali said the campaigning period allocated in previous general elections was too short.

Others who attended today's meeting were Pas secretary-general Nasharudin Mat Isa and vice-president Mustafa Ali, DAP national organising secretary Kerk Kim Hock and national publicity secretary Tan Kok Wai, Parti Keadilan Nasional deputy president Dr Chandra Muzaffar and vice-president Marina Yusoff and PRM secretary-general Dr Sanusi Osman.

Last June, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the short period allowed for political parties to campaign before polling was constitutional.

Section 3(1) of the Elections (Conduct of Elections) Regulations 1981 reads: "On the issue of a writ in accordance with the provisions of section 12 of the Elections Act 1958, the Election Commission shall publish a notice thereof in the Gazette and such notice shall specify the date on which candidates for election are to be nominated, which in these regulations is referred to as the "day of nomination", not being less than four days after the date of the publication of such notice, and the date or dates on which the polls will be taken in the event of a contest (referred to in these regulations as the "polling date"), not being less than seven days after the day of nomination."

Describing today's meeting as cordial, Syed Husin said the Opposition had also made several other requests to the Commission.

Among these were;

- * to allow those who had registered during April's voter registration exercise to vote if the elections are held this year,
- * to allow representatives from the Commission and the political parties to witness the on-goings of postal voting, and,
- * to make it mandatory for those who cast votes to provide their fingerprints as proof as well.

Elaborating, Syed Husin said as the Commission had indicated at the meeting that it was not possible for those who registered this year to vote, the Opposition hoped the gazetting of new electoral rolls in future would be completed fast.

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