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Dissolution-opposition

LET'S HAVE A CLEAN ELECTION, SAY OPPOSITION PARTIES

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 10 (Bernama) -- Election Commission has been urged to ensure that the coming general election is not only fair but also clean.

Opposition leader Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Tanjong) said the Election Commission must give a fair and adequate period for campaigning.

"The election commission must immediately demonstrate that it can discharge its constitutional mandate to conduct a free, fair and clean election," he told a news conference at Parliament House here today.

He also hoped that the government would not abuse its power as a care-taker government and allow the 650,000 new voters to vote.

On the dissolution of parliament, he said that even though there was no laws against dissolution of parliament in mid session, it was a "scandalous and outrageous" thing to do.

"I had until yesterday thought that (prime minister Datuk Seri Dr) Mahathir would call for polls in the last part of January, although I have not completely ruled out general election this month.

"This is why I have decided not to attend the Socialist International Congress which is meeting in Paris," he said.

Mohamad Sabu (PAS-Kubang kerian) also wanted the Election Commission to carry out its duties as fair as possible.

"We want to see a clean election," he said.

On the dissolution of parliament, he said he was not at all suprised as it clearly showed that the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) did not want the new voters to vote.

Asked whether he would defend his seat, he said he might contest in Perlis.

Asked why not in Kelantan, he said PAS was already strong in Kelantan.

He said PAS was confident of defending Kelantan and an even chance of capturing Kedah and Terengganu.

Mohamad Sabu also said PAS would slaughter 42 cows if it won a seat in Johor.

Asked why 42 cows, he said PAS had waited for 42 years to win at least one seat in Johor.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Democractic Party (MDP) deputy president Liew Ah Kim said the move to dissolve Parliament while in session was to blackmail voters especially those in the civil service.

"I say so because if the people want to enjoy all the benefits promised in the 2000 Budget, they have to ensure the BN government is returned to power," he said.

Liew said that he would defend his Seputih parliamentary seat.

He said the MDP would only contest in several areas in the Klang Valley as it is a new party.

In KOTA KINABALU, Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) President Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan said everybody must ensure that the coming general election be a clean and a riot-free election.

Pairin said he agreed with Dr Mahathir that a peaceful election was important for the country.

"That we agree...that is what we want," he said.

While urging for a democratic election, Pairin also said that the government must also not forget the many incidences in Sabah such as the existence of phantom voters in ensuring that the country's election system is held in a democratic way.

"We have seen too much undemocratic incidences in Sabah...we hope that the dirtiest election won't come true because it will be a bad reflection on Malaysia," he said in reference to Dr Mahathir's statement sometime back that this election would be the dirtiest one as the oppositions resorting to all kinds of dirty tactics to gain support.

Towards this end, Pairin said, PBS would try its best to contribute towards making this election the cleanest one.

In ALOR SETAR, PAS president Datuk Fadzil Noor said the dissolution of Parliament showed that the government could not keep its promises made in the recent budget.

"To avoid it, they dissolve Parliament and then table a new budget after the general election," he said.

He said the government was also afraid to hold the general election after January because of the large number of new voters.

The majority of the new voters of 650,000 are young, whose support the BN leaders have no confidence of getting, he said.

In PULAU PINANG, DAP deputy chairman Puan Chong Eng described the dissolution of Parliament while still in session as a desperate act of the BN.

She said that it had never happened in the country's history as such dissolution would render sittings since the middle of last month useless.

It seemed that the BN had no confidence in facing the voters, she said.

Parti Keadilan Nasional (Keadilan) deputy president Dr Chandra Muzaffar, in a statement, urged the Election Commission to assert its independence by insisting on a minimum three weeks campaign period in the next coming election.

"Since Dr Mahathir Mohamad became Prime Minister in 1981, the campaign period has been systematically reduced from five weeks under Tunku Abdul Rahman to three weeks under Tun Abdul Razak and Tun Hussein Onn to just nine days under Mahathir," he said.

He said Keadilan also called on the Election Commission to ensure that the electoral rolls were free of irregularities. "A clean electoral roll is a prerequisite for a fair and free election," he said.

He said the party also hoped that the commission would ensure the coming general election would be the cleanest election in Malaysian history.

"The Barisan nasional should not be allowed to abuse the state machinery for electoral purposes or to monopolise the public media or to indulge in money politics," said Dr Chandra.

He said Keadilan would try to adhere to the highest ethical standards in the election.

He also urged the mainstream print and electronic media to give fair and equitable coverage to all parties including Keadilan and the other alternative parties involved in the election.

"The media should not allow itself to be used by the BN to smear and scandalise the Barisan Alternative," he said.

He also expressed his regret that BN government had chosen to dissolve parliament before the Dewan Rakyat had approved next year's budget.

"This means that a new budget will have to be presented after the General election. This shows that the BN government has been utterly irresponsible. It is also a lack of sincerity on the part of the BN," he added.

In SEREMBAN, DAP chairman Dr Chen Man Hin said the announcement on the dissolution came as a surprise though it was long awaited by the party.

This was because Dr Mahathir was initially scheduled to attend CHOGM but cancelled his trip at the eleventh hour.

"Though it was a surprise, we have predicted the election to be called

either this month or in January next year," he told BERNAMA when contacted.

He said opposition parties in the so-called Alternative Front would hold a meeting soon to thrash out among them whatever unresolved election-related problems. The front comprises DAP, PAS, Keadilan and Parti Rakyat Malaysia.

Asked whether he would contest in the polls, Chen said there is a possibility but declined to say if he would stand for a state or parliamentary seat.

-- BERNAMA

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