

GE13: Nominations on April 20, polls on May 5

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By Ram Anand

The Election Commission (EC) has announced that the highly-anticipated 13th general election will take place on May 5, while the nomination of candidates will be held on April 20.

EC chairperson Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof (right) announced the dates after a special meeting at the headquarters in Putrajaya today, exactly a week after Parliament was dissolved.

This provides for a campaign period of 15 days - the longest in over three decades.

Advance polling is fixed for April 30, for the police, armed forces and EC staff and their spouses to cast their ballots.

Voters can check details of their polling centre with effect from April 15.

The announcement was telecast 'live' by several television stations, which began the broadcast at 12.34pm.

State and parliamentary polls will take place simultaneously except in Sarawak, where the next state polls are not due till 2016.

Some 13.2 million Malaysians are eligible to vote this time around, with first-time voters making up about 2.6 million of this number.

Of this number, around 270,000 are postal voters from the army and the police force.

The election will cost the commission about RM400 million, Abdul Aziz said.

"We have checked and decided on May 5 as the date for elections, because the date is free from any important events," he said.

He also said that the weather forecast for the polling and nomination days is projected to be "good".

EC not at fault for 'dirty' elections

Abdul Aziz defended the EC against allegations that the polls will be the "dirtiest" in the country's history.

"If the election becomes dirty, it is not because of the EC. It is the political parties and its supporters who must observe the code of conduct," he stressed, and hopes that the election

will be among the best in the history of the nation.

GE13 is widely anticipated to be the closest in the nation's electoral history.

BN, led by Najib Abdul Razak, is moving aggressively to win back a two-thirds majority in Parliament, which it lost in 2008.

Pakatan Rakyat, under Anwar Ibrahim, is aiming to extend the 'political tsunami' of 2008 into more states, especially in the south, even as it gears up for another push into Putrajaya.

In 2008, BN won 140 seats in the Dewan Rakyat, while Pakatan's tally was 82.

Five of the 12 contested state legislatures went to Pakatan, which formed the state government for the first time in Penang, Perak (although it subsequently reverted to BN control), Selangor and Kedah. PAS retained its stronghold of Kelantan.

BN won 50.27 percent of the popular vote, while Pakatan took 46.75 percent.

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