

PM coy on subject of early polls
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The ruling BN coalition discussed elections at a meeting yesterday but Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi remained coy on whether he would go to the polls early.

After the BN's supreme council met with leaders of its member parties, Abdullah admitted to reporters that there was much talk about a possible election.

"But it doesn't mean I need to set a date for the general election," he said Monday night.

The opposition is preparing for an early election which some members say could come as soon as October.

Malaysia must go to the polls by 2009.

Asked whether he was ruling out a vote this year, Abdullah said: "I never reveal what I want to do. I cannot tell you."

Barisan Nasional won a landslide victory in the March 2004 election on the back of Abdullah's campaign to stamp out corruption but he has since been criticised for failing to deliver.

Ready to roll

Lim Kit Siang, chairman of the opposition DAP, said on Sunday that Abdullah may call an early vote because of public frustration with his weak administration, and the economic situation.

The New Straits Times on Sunday reported that senior officials of Barisan Nasional's three main component parties said they were ready to roll out their campaign machinery.

Barisan Nasional has ruled Malaysia for almost half a century and consists of the dominant Umno, MCA and MIC, and other smaller parties.

Leaders of the opposition Islamic party PAS also met on Sunday to discuss their campaign plans if Abdullah calls an early election.

Asked about the opposition's preparations, the prime minister said, "We will face them any time."

Abdullah said Monday the government wanted to focus on implementing mega-projects under the ninth Malaysian Plan, a national development agenda.

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