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Parliament dissolved, paving way for election

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PUTRAJAYA: Parliament was dissolved yesterday, clearing the way for the country's much-anticipated 12th general election.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi ended weeks of intense speculation when he made the announcement at his office shortly after noon.

He said the Yang di-Pertuan Agong had consented to the dissolution, which is the first step in the process of getting 10.9 million registered voters to cast their ballots when polling is held as stipulated under Article 55 of the Federal Constitution.

Speaking at a packed press conference, Abdullah added that state governments had been advised to dissolve their state assemblies at the same time.

The Election Commission and parliament had been informed, he said, adding that the EC would fix the dates for nomination and polling days.

With the exception of Sarawak which already had its state election in 2006, this general election will involve all 12 state assemblies.

According to the Federal Constitution, a general election must be held within 60 days of the dissolution of parliament. Election regulations stipulate that the earliest nominations can be held is four days after the dissolution of parliament or a state assembly, while the earliest polling dates are seven days after nomination.

In the last three elections — 1995, 1999 and 2004 — nominations were within nine days and polling within 19 days of dissolution. If that is the precedent to be



used, then nominations could be on Feb 23 and polling possibly on March 1 or 2.

The five-year term of the Barisan Nasional ends only in May next year, but an early election has been on the cards since the middle of last year.

At stake will be 222 parliamentary seats and 505 state seats. The BN has maintained a comfortable two-thirds majority in the Dewan Rakyat with its thumping win in securing 199 of the seats in 2004.

Abdullah said voters should assess objectively what the BN-led government had done for them and exercise their rights dutifully on polling day.

"When it comes to voting, do exercise your right. Hopefully, there won't be any incidents or disturbances that will stop voters from casting their votes."

On his statement to reporters on Tuesday denying speculation that parliament would be dissolved yesterday, the prime minister said: "I could not give any clue to the date as I needed to get the consent of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong first before I could make the announcement."

"The king has to know it first and decide on the matter. How was I going to give any statement or indications?"



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi announcing the dissolution of parliament in Putrajaya yesterday. With him is Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

Sources said Abdullah had originally intended to dissolve parliament later in the week but the Yang di-Pertuan Agong would have been overseas at that time.

Following confirmation on Tuesday night of the king's travel plans, Abdullah decided to seek an audience and get his consent to dissolve parliament yesterday, the sources said.

On why he chose Feb 13, Abdullah said it had nothing to do with his penchant for number 13. "What is more important is that the king has consented to the dissolution of parliament."

Abdullah, who is also BN chairman, said he had not decided on BN candidates nor how many fresh faces would be fielded.

He expressed confidence that the BN would win more than two-thirds majority in the general election. "With the mandate given, we

can continue our efforts to bring more progress to the country for the benefit of the people."

Abdullah added that the BN had implemented what it had promised to the people.

"Many programmes have been carried out and we will continue to ensure that these will be beneficial to the people and contribute to economic growth."

"This is my ardent hope and the people know it. The BN's record all this while has been excellent, with the government able to improve the livelihood of the people. We have been able to bring the country to greater heights. We will continue to give our best and add value to our work."

"With our experiences, capabilities and good track record, we will and can continue to implement what we have planned for this country and the people."