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Najib admits next GE will be hard fought

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak said he will wait for the outcome of the Sarawak state election before deciding whether to call for an early general election.

"We're looking at (the) Sarawak (state election) and after Sarawak we will decide when the best time (to hold the 13th general election) is. We follow the British system and we can decide, so long as it doesn't go beyond five years," he said.

In an interview with Bloomberg on his achievement after two years in office, which was aired Apr 1, the Prime Minister was asked whether he would call for an early general election if Barisan Nasional (BN) were to do well in the April 16 Sarawak poll.

On clues on the general election timing, Najib said, "This is a favourite pastime and I'd like to keep it that way."

The BN chairman also claimed that the ruling BN had done very

well in the by-elections since the 2008 general election.

"We are doing very well actually in terms of by-elections. Recent by-elections have been very, very positive in terms of results for the Barisan government," he said.

The Prime Minister was also asked whether he felt he needed a mandate for his reform programmes given that he was appointed mid-term.

Najib aiming at "good comfortable majority"

Najib alleged that as far as reforms were concerned, the people supported them.

"We do a lot of polls and we've had a series of by-elections and they show that the people like what the government is doing, otherwise we won't get those kind of results".

"The mandate we received in 2008 was a mandate for five years. So I don't feel compelled to have a



Najib Tun Razak

kind of personal mandate for myself as prime minister. When the time is right, I will go to the people and seek a fresh mandate for the party," he said.

Najib also said that he did not think there was any real risk of BN

losing power (at federal level), because in the last couple of years there was a sense that people were coming around to support the BN.

Najib admitted that he felt that this time around, it would be a very hard-fought general election and the BN would be prepared for it.

Replying to a question on how confident the BN was in winning a two-thirds majority required to pass legislations unassisted, Najib said the most important thing was to have a comfortable majority to make the government work and deliver for the people.

"In a mature democracy, it is difficult to get huge majorities. Look at the case in Australia and many other democracies.

So the question is whether the two-thirds is a realistic objective given the fact that Malaysia as a democracy is also maturing. We will do our best and certainly we would like to have two-thirds," he said.

On what he would consider to be a good election result, the Prime Minister said that traditionally in Malaysia, two-thirds had always been a benchmark.

"If it is a structural change and we're looking at democracies worldwide, some would consider a good comfortable majority as a good election result," he said.

