

Analyst say GE likely to be held in Nov
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KUALA LUMPUR (Aug 21, 2011): Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak (pix)'s remark on Friday that the next general election can be held anytime and is not bound by the works of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Electoral Reforms has fuelled talk of November polls.

Political analyst Datuk Dr Cheah See Kian described the setting up of the panel on polls reforms as a smart move as it conveys the message that "Barisan Nasional has the intention to carry out electoral reforms, thus reducing the negative impact of the Bersih 2.0 rally to the minimum, Oriental Daily News reported today.

Cheah said electoral reforms cannot be done overnight. In fact it may take a year or two, but the panel is an opportunity for BN to show the public that the government genuinely wants to reform and make the electoral process more democratic.

Cheah said BN's tactical move has put Pakatan Rakyat (PR) in a bind. It has opened the panel's door to the Opposition without sacrificing its controlling role in the panel.

If the Opposition stays out, it means it is giving up on a chance to effect electoral reforms, he said.

"This is BN's Blue Ocean election tactic – be seen as inclusive by including PR in the Parliamentary Select Committee on Electoral Reforms while remaining in control of the committee," he pointed out.

"It is an intriguing tactic. Based on the current political scenario, it augurs well for BN to hold a snap election in the very near future."

However, political commentators Ong Kian Meng, while acknowledging that the setting up of the polls panel is a positive move, did not believe BN would gain from it if the election is called in the near future.

He said the move would not have much impact on the next general election as most city folk, particularly those from the higher-income group, are not easily taken in by government tactics.

Nevertheless, he agreed that the sooner an election is held the better for the BN.

Ong said with PR casting doubts on the electoral roll, more dirt may come out the longer the next general election is held off, which would be bad for the BN.

"The July 9 (Bersih) rally involved mainly urban voters, many of whom are not inclined towards the BN in the first place. But if the election is held off, there is the danger that the July 9 'fever' may hit the rural electorate."

He said regardless of whether the polls reform panel is a bane or boom for the BN, it is a good time for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak to call for an election in

November.

Political punters believe Budget 2012, which will be presented in October, would be an election budget.

This is another reason many believe the election will be called in November.

Cheah said the government's decision to postpone the Merdeka Day celebrations to coincide with the Malaysia Day on Sept 16 is an indication that it is paving the way for a general election soon.

Holding the two events together on Sept 16 will endear the federal government to Sabah and Sarawak, the support of which is vital for BN to win a two-third majority in the Parliament.

The recent announcement of a Hari Raya bonus for the civil servants will also help BN win some votes.

On another note, Ong opined that Najib has been overly careful, resulting in indecision on a number of issues. This gives some people the feeling that "he looks more and more like former PM Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi".

In fact, he said, the best time for BN to call for a snap polls was in January when Parti Keadilan Rakyat was in disarray due to infighting.

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