

Pakatan says will kick off election campaign next month

The Malaysian Insider

November 15, 2011

By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 15 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) resolved today to launch a pre-election campaign beginning with a mass rally in PKR-led Selangor next month before sending out its top leaders to each state to identify key election issues.

The decision made by its leadership council this afternoon comes after The Malaysian Insider reported that Datuk Seri Najib Razak will meet Barisan Nasional (BN) component party leaders today to finalise the list of potential candidates and seat allocations.

PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim today said, "We have been ready for some time, that is why we are launching the December 4 programme." — file pic

A component party leader said the meeting, a follow-up to last Friday's BN supreme council meeting, will likely touch on preparations for the 13th general election as the ruling coalition leadership had set December as the deadline for a final list of candidates.

"We discussed steps to prepare for an election that will happen soon beginning with a gathering on December 4 in Stadium Melawati," Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim told reporters today.

PAS vice president Datuk Mahfuz Omar also said at the press conference the event will aim to kick-start efforts to bring PR leaders closer to the ground.

"The PR secretariat will also be organising events to send top leaders to each state to understand local issues in detail," the Pokok Sena MP said.

When asked about the prime minister's meeting with his top leadership, PKR de facto leader Anwar said, "We have been ready for some time, that is why we are launching the December 4 programme."

Although the next polls are not due until 2013, there has been growing speculation that Najib could call for snap elections this year or early 2012 while the country's economic growth is still relatively strong.

In dismissing the speculation, Najib, however, said last week that the BN meeting had merely discussed ways to strengthen the pact ahead of polls but had not deliberated the timing of the election.

The ruling coalition suffered its worst performance in the last general election in 2008 when it lost its two-thirds parliamentary majority and ceded control of five states by winning 140 of 222 parliamentary seats and 307 of 505 state seats.

The Opposition led by Anwar has struggled to build on gains made in the 2008 polls but analysts expect the next elections to be a tough fight due to voter frustration over racial tensions and slow political reforms.

Some analysts have said that Najib could call for polls sooner rather than later, to avoid a possible sharp slowdown in the country's trade-reliant economy as the global outlook

deteriorates.

Malaysia's economy depends heavily on global demand for its electronics and commodities such as palm oil and crude oil, and a global downturn is expected to hit growth.

Economic growth is officially expected to moderate this year from a 10-year high of 7.2 per cent in 2010 due to difficult global economic conditions.

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