

Speculation On Date For General Election Gathers Steam
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 17 (Bernama) -- The date when the 13th general election will be held continues to be the main talking point among Malaysians.

When will parliament be dissolved to make way for general election continues to be speculated on by many quarters.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak recently made an official visit to Sabah and held a closed meeting with Sabah BN leaders.

A BN leader told reporters later that Najib reminded that the general election is close.

The statement is just a reminder to BN component parties in Sabah to be ready for general election at any time.

Determining the date is the right of the prime minister who advises the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to dissolve parliament, prompting the Election Commission (EC) to determine the dates for nomination and polling.

Political observers said several factors indicate that dissolution of parliament may be in May or June, with general election held within 60 days.

The first factor is Najib's cancellation of the Public Service New Remuneration Scheme (SBPA) and adoption of an improved Malaysian Remuneration Scheme (SSM).

Resolving the issue is very important as it involves 1.4mil civil servants who implement transformation policies and improvements for the people and government.

With the decision well received by civil servants, there is no reason for them not to continue supporting the BN government which has looked after the welfare of their children and ensure a brighter future.

The second factor is that Najib and his deputy Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin have been on nationwide tours every weekend to meet the people, as promised at a press conference after Umno General Assembly 2010.

Umno information chief Datuk Ahmad Maslan sounded the war drum by asking BN's election machinery, particularly Umno, to get into fifth gear as general election is close.

He was quoted as saying that general election rarely exceeds four years and therefore, election is at most five months away.

The third factor is the Umno assembly which has been deferred 18 months to Sept 2013. The last assembly held in March 2009 was to consolidate and avoid tussle for posts to focus on general election.

The fourth factor which points towards May or June is Malaysia's economy which is poised to continue its progress in 2012, as stated by Oxford Business Group (OBG), a global publishing, intelligence research and consulting firm.

The report also showed that foreign direct investment (FDI) in Malaysia has increased, with inflation under control and a stable financial sector.

With strong performance in most sectors of the economy in the last 12 months, the report said that Malaysia is expected to achieve better performance in 2012.

In fact, EC had implied that parliament may be dissolved as early as May 2012 to enable general election to be held within 60 days or in May or June.

Chairman Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof said Najib may not dissolve parliament soon as the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) on Electoral Reform is only expected to submit proposals to parliament in April.

Moreover, the four opposition ruled states of Kedah, Kelantan, Penang and Selangor which can hold separate general election for state seats have yet to decide whether to hold general election simultaneously.

PAS vice-president Salahuddin Ayub said the best time for election is early June, that is during the school holidays.

"Parliament will also debate a number of important bills like amendments to the Universities and University Colleges Act (AUKU) and the Internal Security Act (ISA)."

He said if election is not held this June, the prime minister may wait for the expiry of the 12th general election term in March next year.

Deputy Speaker Datuk Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar said it is not a problem to open the new parliament session after election although it was just opened by Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah.

"Unfinished matters like bills and motions can be brought to parliament in the new session for completion. The problem does not arise."

EC has gone on a nationwide tour to brief staff on the election and a staff told Bernama that if election is not held soon, another round of briefing will be held.

The arrival of March 8 means the end of 12th election term is just one year away.

BN has managed to correct weaknesses to emerge stronger and is now more well received by the people.

The election date guessing game started with July 2011 and Nov 11, 2011, the number 11 being Najib's favorite number proved wrong.

March 2012 also seems far fetched as it is already middle of the month although it was a good guess because of the school break during which most general elections were held.

Calling 13th general election in June will take away the element of suspense as it is highly

anticipated but the prime minister may have other suitable dates. Who knows?

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