

**Malaysians Await Election With Apprehension As UEFA Euro Fever Brewing**  
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PUTRAJAYA, May 7 (Bernama) -- As the frenzy over the UEFA European Football Championship, with the opening match scheduled to kick off in Warsaw, Poland on June 8, gripped the world, Malaysians await the 13th general election in apprehension.

Since UEFA Euro was first held in 1960, it has coincided with three general elections in Malaysia when the coveted tournament was held in 1964 in Spain, 2004 (Portugal) and 2008 (Austria and Switzerland).

Spain are the favourites to retain the title which they won in 2008. If this materialises, Spain will become the first European country to win a treble consecutively -- the Euro 2008, the Fifa World Cup 2010 and the Euro 2012.

Given Malaysians fascination about football as manifested in an advertisement tagline, "Makan Bola, Tidur Bola" (eat football, sleep football) many football fans will stay awake late into the night to watch UEFA Euro matches.

As UEFA Euro progresses to the final on July 1, Malaysians are keeping their fingers crossed whether the next general election will be held during the championship.

Suffice to say, the build up to UEFA Euro 2012 is somewhat similar to the preparations for the 13th general election where political parties get their election machinery in tip-top condition while scouting for winnable candidates.

Candidates, who are a liability to the parties, will be dropped.

As team managers decide on the line-up, likewise Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak will field Barisan Nasional (BN) candidates after consulting party's top leaders.

As in football, Najib's decisions will be closely watched as they will have a far-reaching impact on the party and the country.

He has to name candidates, whether old guards and newcomers, who have the physical and mental strength, to endure the political turbulence.

Fielding wrong candidates can be detrimental to the BN and give the opposition an upper hand.

More importantly, Najib needs to create an unbeatable cohesive team to thwart the opposition onslaughts as the coming election will be keenly contested like a football final.

As Najib has until April 28 next year to dissolve Parliament, political parties and pundits are playing a guessing game when the election will be held.

The Election Commission has hinted that Parliament might be dissolved as early as May to make way for the general election within 60 days.

The excitement over the date of the next general election heighten after BN secretary-general Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor asked BN component parties to

submit their list of candidates.

The lists are said to have been handed over to Najib.

The fluttering flags of political parties in many places signifies the general election is around the corner.

Speculation about the election date is drawing nearer is rife after former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad recently asked Najib to hold the general election soon as the political situation favoured the BN.

Dr Mahathir was quoted as saying that Najib's has the edge for his leadership, which was noted by various transformation programmes, was well-received by the people.

As the coming general election is expected to be more intense than before, Najib has to be cautious in determining the right time to dissolve Parliament.

He must ensure that a thorough preparation is made not only by Umno, but also other BN component parties besides gauging the opposition's strength.

The public acceptance of his leadership is a good indication of BN's advantage in recapturing opposition-led states and winning a two-thirds majority.

Najib had said that history has shown BN's resurgence after going through big tests like the May 13 disturbance, the deregistration of Umno and the dismissal of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim from all government and political posts.

Besides Mahathir, former prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, former finance minister Tun Daim Zainuddin and several political analysts were also confidence of the BN's good showing.

Najib, who took over the reins on April 3, 2009, has proven his mettle as a visionary leader with the people enjoying the fruit of his labour through the national transformation programmes.

As a people-oriented leader, he is serious about correcting government weaknesses and going down to the grassroots to attend to their problems.

The 2008 political tsunami was a bitter lesson to the BN. Najib and the BN definitely do not want another nightmare to occur.

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