

**Call polls after Raya, Dr M tells Najib**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
**May 14 , 2012**  
**By Lisa J. Ariffin**

KUALA LUMPUR, May 14 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad suggested today the general election be held “anytime after (Hari) Raya” despite Umno appearing bullish on having polls as soon as possible.

The former prime minister has repeatedly urged Datuk Seri Najib Razak to delay polls and shore up support for the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) first.

But Umno’s 66th anniversary last Friday saw a fiery speech by the prime minister calling on at least 50,000 supporters to ensure “uncivilised enemies” do not “destroy the country.”

When asked if Malaysia may be affected by the European financial crisis after the Aidilfitri celebration in August, Dr Mahathir said, “everything depends on some degree of risk”.

“You have to take that risk. But if you think it’s better to wait, then wait. If you don’t think it’s better to wait, then don’t wait,” he told reporters today after receiving the award for National Reading Icon 2012 here.

However, Dr Mahathir said it was ultimately up to Najib to decide on the date of the polls.

“It is all up to Najib, if he is convinced he has achieved his objective,” he said.

Dr Mahathir added he believed BN will improve on their Election 2008 results, their worst electoral performance.

The former premier then reiterated his previous claim that last month’s Bersih 3.0 rally for electoral reforms was a bid to overthrow the government.

“Bersih is not about Bersih, it is about trying to give picture that the government is oppressive and uses police brutality, so they can overthrow the government by demonstration,” he said, adding that the opposition had resorted to public rallies as “they think they cannot win”.

He said the thousands of rally-goers that attended Bersih 3.0 on April 28 “do not make up whole of Malaysia’s population”.

Last Friday’s massive congregation of Umno supporters, which turned Bukit Jalil Stadium into a sea of red for its 66th anniversary, has left the party’s rank-and-file eager for an early election despite Sabah and Sarawak partners calling for Najib to stay his hand.

East Malaysian have cited ongoing celebrations for the Keamatan and Gawai Dayak harvest festivals but Sabah BN has also been pushing for a royal commission of inquiry (RCI) into the illegal immigrant problem there for months now.

Party leaders are talking up the likelihood of polls being called by next month.

Their confidence appears to stem from the belief that their gathering outnumbered that of the opposition-backed rally for free and fair elections.

Bloomberg had cited last month several unnamed government officials as saying that June 3 is the proposed date for what is likely to be the tightest contest in Malaysian electoral history.

But the Umno president will be overseas at various times throughout this month and BN sources told *The Malaysian Insider* July is a more likely date, before the Ramadan fasting month begins on July 19.

Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim also told *The Malaysian Insider* he would not hold the state election until the second half of the year, which would deny Najib the chance to win back the country's richest state and help cement his hold on power.

Observers say the Pekan MP needs to improve on Election 2008, during which BN lost a record 82 federal seats and five state governments, and only a return to the coalition's customary two-thirds majority of Parliament would guarantee his survival.

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