

PM: GE can be held during haj
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KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak is not discounting the possibility that the general election may be held during the haj season.

Asked if he would take into consideration the haj season in deciding when to seek dissolution of Parliament as demanded recently by PAS leaders including deputy president Mohamad Sabu, the Prime Minister said: "No, how can I be tied to any demands from PAS or any leader?"

"In our history, we have conducted general election during the haj season in 1986."

The 1986 general election was on Aug 3, 13 days before Hari Raya Aidiladha.

Najib, who is Umno president, related how a member of his Umno division committee was nominated as a candidate for the general election that year.

"I could not communicate this to him because he was in Mecca. When he got back (from the haj), he accepted the fact that he could not be an elected representative, even though he would have won had he contested," said Najib.

He added that the Government would not obstruct anyone from performing the religious obligation.

The timing of this year's haj season, which starts before Najib is scheduled to table the 2013 Budget on Sept 28, has raised speculation that elections, if called soon after the Budget, could fall within the pilgrimage season.

Lembaga Tabung Haji in a recent statement responding to questions from *The Star* said the first batch of this year's estimated 27,900 haj pilgrims will begin leaving for Saudi Arabia on Sept 17

The peak of the haj season will be during Hari Raya Aidiladha which is expected to fall on Oct 26. The last group of Malaysian pilgrims will return to Malaysia on Nov 29.

On the Lynas rare earth plant in Pahang, Najib said the safety of the people was a priority, but "we must make our considerations based on scientific facts and not worries, imaginary fears or certain assumptions."

On the resignation of Rafizi Ramli as chief executive of the Selangor state economic advisory office, Najib said it indicated a serious split in PKR.

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