

Dr M: I would have called for elections last year
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By Syed Jaymal Zahiid

KUALA LUMPUR, March 27 — A Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad administration would have triggered a general election last year, the former prime minister said today in joining Malaysians' lament over the long wait for polls.

"If I was the prime minister, I would have called for elections last year. All this waiting... one month, two months, three months... it just never stops," he said today.

The country's longest-serving PM also suggested that incumbent Datuk Seri Najib Razak may have allowed the initiative to slip away by letting the existing Parliament term to run so near to a forced dissolution.

"I was expecting elections to be held last year but because I'm not prime minister it didn't happen," Dr Mahathir told reporters after launching a corporate event here.

In April last year, he had said Najib should have exploited the positive mood created from a slew of cash handouts and a civil service pay increase and called for a general election then.

At that point, talks were rife that election may be held as early as June with Parliament expected to be dissolved in mid-May.

But Najib suffered a major blow following Putrajaya's violent response to the April 28 rally for electoral reforms, which ended with clashes between protesters and the police that left scores, including police officers and journalists, injured and hospitalised.

The Najib government drew brickbats domestically and widespread condemnation from the international community over the handling of the rally.

A survey conducted by independent pollster Merdeka Centre showed Najib's approval rating dipped by 4 per cent to 65 per cent in May from 69 per cent in February.

The setback was said to have forced Najib, who is seeking for his first mandate as prime minister in Election 2013, to delay calling for elections at a later date.

The present Parliamentary term ends on April 28 and polls must be held within 60 days of dissolution. sitters' support in addition to its close to four million members nationwide to procure a stronger mandate.

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