

Malaysia decides on May 5
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By Mohd Farhan Darwis

PUTRAJAYA, April 10 — Malaysians will go to polls on May 5, the Election Commission (EC) announced today, starting the official countdown to when voters decide whether to keep the Barisan Nasional (BN) in government or usher in a new administration under Pakatan Rakyat (PR).

The election regulator, which met today, also set April 20 as the nomination date, which will signal the start of formal electoral campaigns that will last 15 days.

“On this day, the EC that comprises seven panel members... has held a special meeting and is announcing the important dates for GE13,” Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof, the EC chairman, said in a live broadcast on national television, using the acronym for the 13th general election.

“The date for nomination is on April 20, which is a Saturday, early voting is on April 30 and polling is on May 5, which is on a Sunday.”

Yesterday, the commission chief had hinted it may depart with tradition and fix polling for Election 2013 to take place on a weekday.

The commission decided today, however, to stick with custom and allow Malaysians to cast their ballots on Sunday.

The commission has also been given RM400 million to carry out the elections, Abdul Aziz said, adding that it was the biggest budget to date.

The EC has appointed 379 officers to enforce the election rules and another 222 officers and 1,088 assistants to monitor the polls during the formal campaign period.

A total 8,789 voting centres will be set up, the EC chairman said.

The commission will also be using the electoral roll last updated in the fourth quarter of 2012, which will be gazetted tomorrow, he said.

A total 13,268,002 Malaysians registered on the roll and are eligible to vote in the 13th general elections, touted to be a tight race between a stronger three-party opposition pact and the BN coalition for federal power.

Of that figure, 12,992,661 comprise regular voters, 161,251 from the armed forces and their spouses, 111,136 from the police force and their spouses while 2,954 Malaysians abroad are listed as absentee voters, Abdul Aziz said.

Malaysians can check their election details online from April 15 onwards, the EC chief said, by logging on to its website at www.spr.gov.my or www.pru13.gov.my. Alternatively, they can send a text message with their identity card numbers via SMS through their telecommunication companies.

Datuk Seri Najib Razak announced the dissolution of Parliament on April 3, four years to the date from when he took office in 2009, replacing Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as prime minister mid-term after the Penang lawmaker led Barisan Nasional (BN) to its worst

performance since 1963.

The 13-party coalition lost its customary two-thirds majority in Parliament as well as five states in Election 2008.

A total of 222 parliamentary and 505 state seats will be contested. Sarawak will sit out this round of elections as the Borneo state went to the polls in 2011.

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