

Guessing Game On 13th General Election Polling Day
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 3 (Bernama) -- With the conclusion of the guessing game on the dissolution of Parliament on Wednesday, four years after Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak took over the helm of the Malaysian Government as the sixth prime minister, the next subject that comes into mind is the most obvious:

When is polling day?

After Najib's announcement on the dissolution, the focus now shifts to the Election Commission (EC) which will decide the dates for nomination and polling day.

What is certain is that between the two dates, nomination day and polling day, there is a period of at least 10 days for political parties to campaign to win the hearts of the people and obtain the mandate to form the next government through the electoral process.

With the assumption that all state assemblies are also dissolved today or in a day or two, with the exception of Sarawak which is not required to dissolve its state assembly while Negeri Sembilan's assembly was dissolved automatically on March 28, many have predicted the 13th General Election (13GE) will be held in the weeks at the end of April.

If the EC wants to hold the election simultaneously nationwide, it must be held before May 26, that is 60 days after the Negeri Sembilan State Legislative Assembly had been dissolved automatically on March 28.

This writer tends to believe that the important indicator in determining the date of polling day would be the date of the Asean Summit in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei between April 20 and 27 (both of which fall on Saturday), and considering Malaysia is among the key members of the regional organisation, it should be represented by a head of government.

By taking into consideration the above factors, many parties are predicting the EC will set the polling day date before April 24 and many quarters believed that polling day may fall on Saturday, April 20.

Earlier, EC chairman Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof had said that the campaign period would not be less than 10 days and counting back from April 20, nomination day may fall on Tuesday, April 10.

The selection of Saturday for the polling day was deemed appropriate as the election this time is not held during school holidays, and Saturday is the probable choice as many school buildings will be used as polling centres.

If the 10-day campaign does not include nomination day, polling day will fall on Sunday, April 21 but the education ministry has to declare an event holiday for schools in Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu as it is a school day in those states.

Apart from April 20, other more logical possibilities are the following Saturday on April 27, but then the date will be after the Asean Summit.

Many parties believe the Parliamentary general election will take place before the Asean Summit, and that Barisan Nasional will maintain power in the administration at the 13GE

and Najib will attend the event as prime minister with the people's new mandate.

Whatever the decision of the EC, the campaign for 13GE began a year ago.

Since last week, the campaign was getting more intense with the flying of flags bearing symbols of political parties.

It was obvious the general election was around the corner.

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