

Najib to make TV address, to dissolve Parliament today
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 3 — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak is expected to dissolve Parliament and call a long-anticipated general election in a televised announcement this morning, government officials said.

Najib, whose ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition faces a resurgent opposition challenging its 56-year rule, will make the national address at 11.30am, an official in his department said. He is expected to use the TV address to announce the election, two government sources told Reuters.

The poll will likely be held in late April, following a campaign period of about two weeks.

Najib's BN coalition lost its two-thirds parliamentary majority for the first time in Election 2008 and faces a three-party opposition pact led by former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Najib, who took over from Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in 2009 after BN lost its majority, will point to economic growth of 5.6 per cent as he seeks to regain lost electoral ground.

Najib has to call the election by the end of April, when Parliament would have dissolved automatically.

He had been expected to call the election as early as 2011, but has delayed holding the polls as he seeks to shore up his support and convince Malaysians his economic and political reforms are bearing fruit.

The 59-year-old son of a former premier is aiming to push the developing Southeast Asian nation into high-income status by 2020 through an ambitious US\$444 billion (RM1.38 trillion) economic transformation programme (ETP).

Anticipation of a close election race that could cause policy uncertainty has frayed investors' nerves this year and made Kuala Lumpur's stock market one of the worst performers in Asia.

The main KLSE stock index briefly fell more than 3 per cent in early trade today following the announcement of Najib's television address. At 10:27am, it was down 2.09 per cent at 1,649.84. — Reuters

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