

## **GE13: Najib ups the tempo in his sprint towards the finish line**

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KUALA LUMPUR: Hitting the home stretch that was the answer Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak gave when asked about the date of the next general election.

Like any racer, the Prime Minister has upped the tempo in his sprint towards the finish line by adding more functions into his already packed diary.

This, his aides say, is to ensure that he covers all the bases from national issues to putting out fires started by those jostling to be candidates.

It is learnt that he has taken time off between functions each day to meet people who will be dropped or not chosen to be candidates.

With the nation expecting an announcement of when elections will be called, his every move is scrutinised.

Yesterday, his weekly meeting with the Yang di-Pertuan Agong had tongues wagging that he had gone to seek the King's permission to dissolve Parliament. No announcement followed.

Aides said the audience was just the weekly briefing the Prime Minister gives to the King on issues affecting the nation after chairing the Cabinet meeting.

It is now widely speculated that March 25 is when he will ask for royal assent to dissolve Parliament.

Insiders noted that the Negri Sembilan assembly expires on March 27, and said that Najib is unlikely to allow that to happen as it would be bad for the morale of the ruling coalition.

In the run-up to the polls, Najib continues his punishing pace.

Today, he will open the Specialist Complex and Ambulatory Care Centre at the Kuala Lumpur Hospital.

On Thursday, he will make his umpteenth visit to Kelantan where Barisan Nasional is said to be giving the PAS government a good fight.

On Saturday, he will dine with the Chinese community in Seremban where he hopes to boost Barisan's chance to recapture seats from the Opposition. Negri Sembilan is the only Barisan-held state that does not have a two-thirds majority.

On Sunday, he and his deputy Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin will join hundreds of thousands of women in Putrajaya for the Million Women Purple March to celebrate International Women's Day.

Mentris Besar and Chief Ministers will lead similar gatherings in their states.

In the evening, he will attend a function with the Indian community in Klang another place he has visited many times to wrest Selangor from Pakatan Rakyat.

For the following week, Najib has lined up several important functions.

The first will be on Tuesday when he unveils the Pemandu Annual Report a function to be carried "live" by most TV stations.

It will be his "report card" for the nation to judge his achievements since he took office some four years ago, which is understood to stand up to any examination in terms of achievement.

Najib, who is also the Finance Minister, told TV audiences on Tuesday that the Malaysian economy was strong and could buck external global trends.

In the last quarter, Malaysia achieved a 6.4% growth, indicating the resilience of its economy.

"When we talk about benefits to the people from 2009 to 2011, our Gross National Income per capita has grown from US\$6,670 to US\$9,970 (RM20,715 to RM30,965) roughly about 49%," he said in the TV3 interview.

It is learnt that on March 23, Najib will attend a charity dinner to raise funds for the recently approved independent Chung Hwa school.

He is expected to be joined at the function by international action star Jackie Chan.

Najib is widely expected to use the occasion to announce several "good news" for Chinese education.

From there, he will go to the final *Janji Ditepati* (Promises Kept) exposition to be held at the municipal council field.

The *Janji Ditepati* tour had presented Najib with occasions to highlight the achievements of his administrations in keeping with promises he made when taking office on April 3, 2009.

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