

GE13: Talk of highly-anticipated Parliament dissolution intensifies
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KUALA LUMPUR: All eyes will be on the Cabinet meeting today at Putrajaya after weeks of intense speculation on when the Dewan Rakyat will be dissolved for the 13th general election.

Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and his colleagues are scheduled to have their Cabinet group photography session speculated to be the last before the polls with reports that the ministers have been told to dress in "dark suits".

It is learnt that the Prime Minister has his usual scheduled appointment to see the Yang di-Pertuan Agong in the morning and could use the occasion to ask the King for consent to dissolve the Dewan Rakyat.

However, at press time, there was no confirmation from the Palace or the PM's office. The media have been speculating on the possible dates for dissolution and polling as the current Dewan Rakyat term expires on April 28.

Najib will also be celebrating his fourth year in office as Prime Minister today, having been sworn in in 2009 after Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi stepped down following Barisan Nasional's poor performance in the 2008 general election.

If the Dewan Rakyat is indeed dissolved today, Najib is expected to make the announcement at a press conference which all the TV stations are on standby to broadcast live.

The Barisan supreme council is scheduled to meet tomorrow and expected to endorse the list of candidates Najib had drawn up based on the lists provided by the 14 component parties.

Najib is not expected to unveil the names of the candidates until after the Election Commission decides on the nomination and polling dates.

However, the Barisan manifesto will be unveiled soon after the dissolution to enable the candidates and parties to make full use of the document.

Najib is also having a cycle-ton at 5pm in Putrajaya today where he and his Cabinet colleagues are going to cycle 12km to promote healthy living and to allow the people a chance to interact with the PM and the ministers. About 10,000 people are expected to take part in the event touted as the 1Malaysia Patriotic Cycleton.

Meanwhile, Najib in his latest blog posting on the 1Malaysia website reminded the people that the general election was "almost here" and urged them to come out in droves to cast their votes "for the candidate or party they feel will best serve them through the next few years".

He also outlined the three main initiatives undertaken by the EC to ensure "the *rakyat's* voice is represented as accurately as possible".

“First, the EC has undertaken various efforts to keep the electoral roll accurate and up to date, in order to prevent potential fraud and impersonation by phantom voters.

“Second, the EC has enabled postal voting for the first time in our history. This will allow Malaysians overseas to exercise their voting rights from countries ranging from Australia and Britain to China and Qatar.

“Advance voting has also been implemented for those within the country who have other duties to perform on voting day, allowing them to vote several days earlier,” the Prime Minister wrote.

The third initiative was the compulsory use of indelible ink to identify those who have voted.

“Two shades have been identified for use, to differentiate between advance voters and regular voters.”

Saying that he has done his part as a political leader by signing Transparency International's Election Integrity pledge, he promised to get all Barisan candidates to honour this agreement.

“The task now falls on you to ensure you are prepared for the coming election. Let's move forward together.”

Meanwhile, some Barisan leaders said the candidates list had yet to be finalised, adding that it still needed to be fine-tuned.

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