

GE13: It's on!

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PUTRAJAYA: The 13th General Election is on. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak confirmed that Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah had consented to the dissolution of the 12th parliament.

"I met the Agong this morning and he consented to the dissolution of Parliament," Najib said during a live televised speech after the Cabinet meeting here Wednesday.

He advised all the state governments, except Negri Sembilan and Sarawak, to also dissolve their respective state legislative assemblies to allow the state elections to be held simultaneously with the general election.

As at 11.45pm, the state assemblies of Malacca, Pahang, Perak, Perlis, Sabah and Terengganu had been dissolved.

The Johor, Penang, Kedah, Kelantan and Selangor state assemblies are expected to announce their dissolution on Thursday.

Sarawak will not be holding state polls as the previous elections were held in April 2011.

The Negri Sembilan state legislative assembly dissolved automatically on March 28.

Sarawak held its state election on April 16, 2011, and the Barisan Nasional (BN) was returned to power after it won 55 of the 71 seats contested.

Following the dissolution of the Dewan Rakyat today, the Election Commission (EC) is expected to meet soon to set the dates for nomination and polling.

The current mandate of the government was due to expire on April 28 this year.

According to Article 55 (4) of the Federal Constitution, a general election must be held within 60 days of the dissolution of parliament.

Based on the latest electoral rolls, as of December last year, 13.3 million people are eligible to go to the polls in the country.

A total of 222 parliamentary seats will be contested in the coming general election, 31 of which are in Sarawak, while 505 state seats will be up for contest.

At the time of dissolution, Barisan had 137 seats in the Dewan Rakyat with the rest held by the DAP (29), PKR (23), PAS (23), Parti Kesejahteraan Insan Tanahair (Kita) (one) and PSM (one). Eight seats were held by independent MPs.

In the last general election, in 2008, Barisan failed to secure a two-third majority in the Dewan Rakyat, garnering only 140 seats while the opposition grabbed 82 seats.

Besides failing to regain control of Kelantan, Barisan also lost control of Kedah, Penang, Perak and Selangor.

After three elected representatives declared themselves friendly to Barisan almost a year later, the opposition Perak government fell and Barisan took back the state.

The 13th general election is the first for Najib as Barisan leader, after having taken over as the prime minister from Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on April 3, 2009.

Meanwhile, the EC is scheduled to implement eight new elements as part of the effort to improve the running of the general election, in accordance with the recommendations in the report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Electoral Reform presented to parliament on April 3 last year.

These include the use of indelible ink to mark voters, early voting to replace postal voting for policemen and soldiers, allowing postal voting for Malaysians abroad and journalists, and setting a campaign period of not less than 10 days.

After the 12th general election, 16 by-elections were held following the death or resignation of elected representatives, six of these for parliamentary seats and 10 for state seats. Eight seats were won by the BN and eight by the opposition.

The parliamentary by-elections were held in Permatang Pauh, Kuala Terengganu, Bukit Gantang, Hulu Selangor, Sibul and Batu Sapi while the state by-elections were held in Bukit Selambau, Batang Ai, Manek Urai, Permatang Pasir, Penanti, Bagan Pinang, Galas, Batu Sapi, Tenang, Merlimau and Kerdu.

The number of by-elections was the highest after the 1995-1999 parliamentary term that saw 17 by-elections held.

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