

Report: Parliament may be dissolved after Chap Goh Meh
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Parliament is expected to be dissolved a week after Chap Goh Meh on March 2 to pave the way for the 14th general election, according to a news report.

Chap Goh Meh or the Lantern Festival is celebrated on the 15th night of the Chinese New Year, which falls on Feb 16.

According to *The Sun*, political analysts believe that the window for holding the general election is closing fast and predict that polling day would be around the end of March or in April.

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak's Prof Jeniri Amir said Parliament has to be dissolved by next month as the election cannot be held in May as it would be Ramadan and the Muslim fasting month.

"Next month will be very suitable to dissolve Parliament and the same time, the election must be held before (former opposition leader) Anwar (Ibrahim) is released from prison," he told the newspaper.

In a blog posting on Feb 9, veteran newsman Ahiruddin Atan, however, predicted that the election would not be called before May due to Felda's Jalan Semarak land issue.

He noted how Felda chairperson Shahrir Samad, on Feb 8, announced the board's decision to establish a special committee on legal review to recommend legal or disciplinary action against Felda officers implicated in a forensic audit investigation into the matter.

"Findings by the audit firm have been submitted to the PM but these findings were not shared with the press last night. Shahrir declined to even reveal the name of the audit firm.

"That aside, the latest committee will require three months to complete its review, Shahrir said. It's February so three months will take us to May. The Holy Ramadan starts middle May and Hari Raya is mid-June. The constitution dictates that GE14 must be held by August this year.

“PM Najib (Abdul Razak) is not likely to call for a GE if the Felda Jalan Semarak land issue is not fully resolved. Too much at stake there,” he added in his blog Rocky’s Bru.

Anwar campaigning is risky for BN

Meanwhile, political analyst James Chin also pointed to Anwar's slated release from prison in early June.

"The election should be held after the Chinese New Year and also before Anwar is released from prison.

“It is risky (for BN) if Anwar is allowed to campaign during the election,” the inaugural director of the Asia Institute Tasmania, University of Tasmania, told *The Sun*.

However, the opposition had expressed concern following Deputy Home Minister Nur Jazlan Mohamed's statement that Anwar's sentence could be extended if his recent media statements had been issued from behind bars without the approval of the director-general of the Prisons Department.

It would come as no surprise if the government feared the prospect of Anwar hitting the campaign trail together with his former nemesis Dr Mahathir Mohamad, especially with regard to their impact on the Malay electorate.

The former opposition leader is renowned for his oratory skills and is considered the cohesive element which binds the opposition coalition.

The Sun article also pointed out that at the time of writing Najib and his deputy Ahmad Zahid Hamidi do not have any official foreign trips scheduled until April.

The newspaper also quoted sources stating that Zahid is working hard to deliver BN's targetted 148 parliament seats, which would see the ruling coalition regaining its two-thirds majority in the Lower House since failing to do so in the last two elections.

On the other hand, electoral reform groups such as Bersih have been persuading Malaysian voters to come out in droves on polling day to cast their ballots amid a group pushing for spoilt votes to protest the lack of credible and viable choices in the coming election.

Bersih has since launched a campaign urging Malaysians to vote as a way to defeat electoral fraud.

On Jan 25, Anwar's daughter and PKR vice-president Nurul Izzah forecasted that the new electoral boundaries would be passed by Parliament during the March 5-April 5 sitting.

“Most of us feel they will bulldoze the redelineation exercise... and it will be approved by virtue of (BN having) the majority in Parliament.

“It will be a parliamentary session to remember,” she said, predicting that GE14 would be the nation's “dirtiest election ever”.

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