

## India sets elections for next month

by UPI

NEW DELHI - An announcement Monday that India's national elections will begin next month has triggered a scramble by political parties, analysts said.

A trend of having to rely on small political factions to cobble together government coalitions is expected to accelerate in the upcoming elections, which are being overshadowed by India's economic slowdown, The New York Times (NYSE:NYT) reported.

Observers said the race to form political alliances is on, contended amid a fractured landscape of innumerable regional and caste-based parties. The vote will happen in five phases between April 16 and May 13, with 714 million voters eligible to elect the next Legislature, the Times said.

A new government must be formed by June.

The worst global economic crisis in decades has slowed India's formerly high-flying economy. The country saw its gross domestic product growth falling from 9 percent to 5.3 percent in the fourth quarter -- numbers that prompted opposition accusations of economic mismanagement by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's governing National Congress Party, the Times said.

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