

EC shifting into gear for general election

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Schools selected nationwide as polling stations have been formally notified by the returning officers of their respective constituencies, further fuelling speculation that snap polls are on the way.

The letters sent early this month also invite teachers and other school staff to register themselves as polling centre chiefs and polling clerks.

"This is to inform that I have been appointed as returning officer for (this parliamentary constituency) for the 13th general election which can be called at any time before the 12th Dewan Rakyat term expires.

"For your information, your school has been selected by the Election Commission as one of the polling centres in the next general election," the letter reads.

polling day 080308 voters queuing According to several teachers who did not want to be named, today is the deadline for schools to provide their lists of those interested to be polling clerks.

It also understood that some schools held meetings this week to decide on the polling clerks, who could be paid allowances of up to RM500 each.

The teachers also said those who were pregnant and due to give birth around the year-end were not eligible for appointment as polling clerks.

Contacted by Malaysiakini, EC secretary Kamaruddin Mohamed Baria confirmed that the commission began its training for polling clerks today.

"Training starts in Selangor today, with the rest of the states to follow," he said.

Kamaruddin said that the length of the training depended on the areas in which the polling clerks would be working.

"The training will involve video screening and the holding of a mock election," he said.

No instruction regarding school halls

Most of the volunteers have acted as polling clerks in several previous elections and as such, it would merely be a refresher course for them.

"We'll be updating them on some new procedures," Kamaruddin said, noting also that allowances for polling clerks have seen a slight increase.

The EC this morning held a briefing for returning officers in Selangor, in preparation for the 13th general election which need not be called until March 2013.

Asked about a media report that schools had received instructions not to rent out their halls until the end of the year, Kamaruddin said the EC did not send out any such directive.

"No, we didn't issue any directive. We don't even know when the election will be called," he said.

In most cases, he said, only classrooms are used as polling centres, with the EC moving in to arrange tables and chairs a day earlier.

"Ballot papers and boxes will only be sent to the premises in the morning of the polling day," he added.

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