

Sibu by-election on May 16
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Sibu voters will go to the polls on May 16 after an eight-day campaign with nomination day being set for May 8, announced the Election Commission today.

This will be the 11th by-election in the country after the last general election in March 8, 2008.

NONEEC chairman Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof said that as per usual, there will be a "cooling off" period at midnight on the eve of polling day.

When asked about the possibility of opposition leaders being barred from entering the state in the run up to the polls, Abdul Aziz washed his hands off the issue, saying that the matter is not under the commission's purview.

"It is a matter for the state government and the immigration department. It is not the EC's responsibility," he said this morning.

"I'm sure (the immigration department) have their own reasons. But as far as the EC is concerned, Malaysians should be free to move around from one state to another."

PKR leaders R Sivarasa and N Gobalakrishnan were, on separate occasions, "blacklisted" and barred from entering the state in last year and 2008 respectively.

Naming Sibu district officer Wong See Meng, as the returning officer, Abdul Aziz said that there will also be two enforcement teams for each of the three state seats under the parliamentary constituency.

They will monitor campaigning to ensure that no laws are broken under the Elections Act.

He also said that the commission will be using the electoral rolls from 2009 updated until April 9.

Abdul Aziz broke away from the tradition of holding the press conference at the EC headquarters in Putrajaya by switching the event to a Shah Alam hotel, which also act a the base for the EC bigwigs for the by-election.

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SUPP's Robert Lau Hoi Chew, who was also the deputy transport minister, died on Apr 9 after losing in the battle with liver cancer.

At last count, Sibu has 53,679 voters with a Chinese majority of 60 per cent. There is also a large concentration of Melanau (20%), Iban (18%), Orang Ulu (1.1%) and other races (0.9%).

Lau, who had been Sibu MP under the Sarawak United People's Party (Supp) flag for five terms since 1990, beat Sarawak DAP chief Wong Ho Leng and PKR's Lim Chin Chuang in a three-cornered fight in the last general election.

Lau won by a majority of 3,235 votes with 19,138 votes against Wong's 15,903 and Lim's 812.

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