

**After Umno, others mull putting off party polls**  
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As Umno, BN's biggest component party, has decided to postpone its party election scheduled next year to up to 18 months, the grapevine has it that several other parties might follow suit.

Gerakan is one of them. The party is scheduled to hold its party election next year.

"The CC (central Committee) will meet on Dec 18 to discuss this matter. Before that, the CWC (central working committee) will also discuss this matter," its deputy president Chang Ko Youn told Bernama.

He said Gerakan had postponed its party election once in 2007, due to the 12th general election which was held in early March 2008, and the party election was only carried out after that.

"There are different views on this matter but generally, some leaders felt it is better for the party to postpone its election to minimise infighting. If there is party election next year, everyone will be fighting for positions, right from the division up to the central leadership.

"That's why, we believe, it is better for us to postpone the party election so that everyone can focus on the general election, which will be very crucial for the party's revival," he said.

For the MCA, the second largest component party in the coalition, the party election next year will be carried out on schedule, unless the party's powerful decision-making body, the central committee, decides otherwise.

Secretary-general Kong Cho Ha said: "The party election is still on schedule... there is no plan so far, to defer the party election.

"However, the CC still has the final say. If we want to postpone the party election, there is a certain requirement we have to address first before we can do that," he said.

MCA central committee member Ti Lian Ker explained that under the party constitution, the party election could only be postponed if there was a general election and that too, it could only be postponed for a certain period.

"Moreover, under the constitution, we can't simply postpone our party election as there is a certain provision which states that it can only be postponed after three and half years from the date of the last general election. Technically, we can only do that by next September," he said.

Still too early

Ti said it was still too early for the party leadership to decide on the matter but some members believe the MCA central committee meeting on Dec 13 would provide some indication even though the matter was raised in the previous meeting.

In 2007, the MCA had postponed its party election at all levels until the general election concluded in March 2008, where Ong Tee Keat was elected president and Dr Chua Soi Lek, his deputy.

However, the party was embroiled in internal crisis until a fresh poll, only for top or central leadership, was held in March this year where Chua was elected the new president.

Next year, the party still has to undergo election at all levels for a new term of three years as the March fresh poll for top leadership only meant for the remaining period of the current term which will end next October.

However, it is not issues for the majority of the BN component parties, particularly from Sabah and Sarawak, as they have undergone their respective party elections this year, except for the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) which is scheduled to have its election at the end of next year.

"We do not have any plan to postpone it. Not a problem for us as the state election needs to be held before July next year. Our party's election, especially at branch level, will only start after that. It doesn't really affect us," SUPP president Dr George Chan Hong Nam told Bernama today.

- Bernama

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