

**Fixed Dates For Elections**  
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**By P. Ramakrishnan**

Elections should not be a cat-and-mouse game. It should never be a guessing game either. There should be a definite predetermined date that is publicly disclosed so that everyone knows the date of the next general election.

This is practised by a number of countries which have a fixed date for the election. Among them are Norway and Switzerland with fixed dates. Canada and its provinces (Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Northwest Territories) have implemented fixed-term elections too.

In the United Kingdom the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011 fixes the general election on the first Thursday in May every five years. Elections to the European Parliament occur every five years in June.

Presidential elections in the United States occur every four years on the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November. Germany, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) have semi-fixed terms in that dissolution at any time in mid-term is allowed only to resolve serious deadlock.

It is noted that "pre determined or fixed election dates have the advantage of fairness and predictability". Though the Barisan Nasional may not be in favour of this (as under the present practice, it can surprise the Opposition by calling for a snap election when the circumstances are favourable to it, the BN must be realistic and see the advantage in this when it becomes the Opposition after the 13th GE!)

Too much time and money is wasted in trying to create a favourable situation to call for an election. The recent budget is a good example of how voters are being bribed for the BN's benefit. Households earning less than RM3,000 were in no better position in 2009, 2010 and 2011 but this is being attended to only in 2012 just before the 13th GE!

The RM500 may assist them in January but does their hardship disappear after that? What about the next 11 months? If this was a long-term solution for the whole of this year and the years after that, then there is no ground to accuse the BN of bribing the voters!

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