

Analysts: Ismail Sabri not likely to call for early polls

PETALING JAYA: With calls for an early general election ringing loud within the Barisan Nasional and Umno camp, political analysts feel that the Prime Minister may prefer his term, at the top to stretch to its furthest.

The current government has until mid-2023 to call the 15th General Election.

Universiti Sains Malaysia senior political science lecturer Prof Dr Sivamurugan Pandian said Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob might want to hold off the polls till next year in light of the recent backlash against the government's handling of the flood situation.

"The Prime Minister may want to wait a bit longer to improve the rating of his leadership as well as to improve the deficit trust of members of his Cabinet," he said.



Voting season: A woman casting her vote in Kota Belud, Sabah, during the previous election.

Sivamurugan added that deferring the polls to 2023 would also allow Ismail Sabri, who is an Umno vice-president, to push for the party

election to be held before the general election.

He noted that Umno could be split between those who want a

snap general election and those preferring it to be held in 2023.

In September last year, the Ismail Sabri-led government signed an MOU with the Pakatan Harapan opposition coalition to strike political harmony.

Political analyst Prof Dr Nik Ahmad Kamal Nik Mahmud said Ismail Sabri is likely to hold off calling GE15 till next year to allow him time to better focus on the national economy and the Covid-19 pandemic.

"I believe it will be done at the end of this year or (early) 2023 when the economy and Covid-19 situation has more or less settled down.

"By that time, the internal crisis in Umno would have been resolved," he said.

Nik, Ahmad, who is the Inter-

national Islamic University legal adviser, said it is crucial for Ismail Sabri to push for the Umno polls to be held before calling for GE15.

Political analyst Dr Azmi Hassan said Barisan Nasional would be buoyed by the results of the recent Melaka and Sarawak elections, with support returning to the government.

This, he said, would encourage Barisan to hold the general election as soon as possible as they are at their strongest point, with the opposition at its lowest.

However, Dr Azmi felt Ismail Sabri might prefer to delay the polls with the government being blamed for its poor handling of the floods.

"So perhaps for him, it is better to have the election later rather than sooner," he said.