

# 'Timing for GE must be right'

But analysts say polls delays may hurt the economy

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**PETALING JAYA:** The question on everyone's mind is when the general election (GE) will be held, but another round of frenzied speculation is expected after the Prime Minister has made it clear that the timing must be correct.

While political pundits believe the time is right for national polls to be held and some in Umno want it as soon as possible, several lawmakers are of the opinion that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob should not be pushed to decide on this now.

Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Reezal Merican Naina Merican said the Prime Minister should be given space to decide when's the best time to call for polls.

He said several considerations needed to be made before a GE could be held.

"Political scenarios must be right, issues affecting the people must be addressed and the economy must be sound.

"I am sure that the Prime Minister already has in mind the right time to call for an election," he said.

Padang Rengas MP Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz supported Ismail Sabri in not rushing to call for an election, saying that the country is facing several challenges and time is needed to settle the issues, including inflation and the high cost of living.

"The price of basic items has gone up. The government should rightly be addressing these issues," said the former de facto Law minister.

The vocal and veteran Umno MP described those pushing for an early election as selfish and only wanting to preserve their interests.

Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Faizal Azumu said the Prime Minister had no reason to rush.

"The Prime Minister has his reasons and can make his own calls," said the Tambun MP.

Deputy Federal Territories Minister and Umno's Datuk Seri



**Guest of honour:** Ismail Sabri (second from left) greeting Malaysian athletes at the Youth and Sports Ministry's Hari Raya open house in Kuala Lumpur, accompanied by his minister Ahmad Faizal. — Bernama

Jalaluddin Alias also felt it should be left to the Prime Minister, as he might have considerations of his own to take into account.

However, Singapore's Institute of International Affairs adjunct senior fellow Dr Oh Ei Sun said it would be better if the GE was held soon.

"Economically, Ismail Sabri should actually hold the GE as soon as possible as the socioeconomic situation of the country could get worse," he said.

Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) political science expert Prof Dr Sivamurugan Pandian agreed, saying Ismail Sabri was facing a dilemma in making a decision on when to call the GE.

He noted that Ismail Sabri would have to take into consideration the

current economic situation – rising inflation and food shortages that could not be easily resolved with more imports due to a weak ringgit – before deciding.

"There may be more uncertainties if the polls are held later," he said.

Nusantara Academy for Strategic Research (NASR) senior fellow Azmi Hassan felt it was fair to delay polls if it impeded the government's response to tackling inflation and the high cost of living.

"If the Prime Minister can tackle issues such as inflation and put aside the politicking, by all means, he can extend his term until the end.

"However, it is better for the Federal Government to call for an early election to get a strong man-

date from the people so that pro-rakyat policies can be drawn," he said.

Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said he wanted to meet Ismail Sabri to seek information straight from the "horse's mouth".

"I think it is best that I meet the Prime Minister and hear his explanation," he said.

Ismail Sabri is one of Umno's three vice-presidents along with Datuk Seri Khaled Nordin and Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid.

Umno has been pushing for the national polls to be held soon.

However, the government and the Opposition had signed a pact not to dissolve Parliament until July 31. The current parliamentary term ends in June 2023.