

**2012 to be of polls**  
**New Straits Times**  
**December 3, 2011**  
**By Kuala Lumpur**

ALL indicators point to 2012 being the year of elections starting with the general election and followed by internal polls of key Barisan Nasional component parties, political observers said.

Party elections of Umno (due in March 2012), MCA (2011), MIC (due in 2012) and Gerakan (due in 2011) had all been postponed so that the BN could focus on the coming 13th general election.

Umno, for instance, has postponed party elections by 18 months from March next year but could hold it before the end of next year.

Logistically, the machinery is ready to hold the general election anytime, even as soon as February just after the Chinese New Year on Jan 23.

"If elections are held, say, in the first quarter, the latest electoral roll would have already been gazetted in February," said a senior official with the Election Commission.

The New Straits Times understands that the Parliamentary Select Committee on electoral reforms had intensified its work to make sure its recommendations could be implemented, should the general election be held in March.

Although the PSC was given six months till March to complete its work, it felt that the recommendations had to be presented earlier so that the EC would be able to adopt the changes in time for the elections.

This explains the tabling of the 115-page interim report in the Dewan Rakyat on Thursday. The Dewan Rakyat has accepted 10 of the recommendations (See accompanying story). Travels of top leaders in the new year will also add to the election-date speculation should there be last minute cancellations.

A government source also said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak would proceed with his plans to visit South Africa in January.

But he is likely to skip the Jan 25-29 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

It may not be sensible to read too much into the prime minister's possible non-appearance in Davos as he had given it a miss before.

Given the long history of speculating election dates, observers were even drawing parallels between the November 1999 general election and the upcoming polls.

The then prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad cancelled a scheduled visit to South Africa to focus on the elections.

Delegates attending the Umno general assembly said they would not join in the frenzy to speculate the likely election date.

They said only the prime minister knows when to call for elections.

"You can make an educated guess, but unless he (the prime minister) announces it (the dissolution of Parliament) then it remains a speculation," said Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk Ahmad Said.

A Kedah Umno delegate believed the 2012 Budget would have a big impact on the election especially when the goodies were being given out in stages beginning with the RM100 school aid for every school-going child.

"For instance, RM500 cash assistance for households earning RM3,000 a month and below will be paid in January," the delegate said.

Copyright © 2011 The New Straits Times Press (Malaysia) Berhad.

Source: <http://www.nst.com.my/top-news/2012-to-be-year-of-polls-1.14264>