

**Balingian by-election on March 29, says Election Commission**  
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**By Diyana Ibrahim**

Election Commission chairman Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof announcing the by-election date for the Balingian state seat. The by-election for the Balingian state seat in Sarawak will be held on March 29 and nomination day has been set for March 17, the Election Commission (EC) announced today.

EC chairman Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof also said that early voting will be held on March 25.

The latest electoral roll – updated on February 27 – will be used for the by-election, Abdul Aziz told a press conference after chairing a meeting on the by-election dates.

Sarawak state assembly speaker Datuk Amar Mohamad Asfia Awang declared the Balingian seat vacant last month after its incumbent Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud resigned to take up his appointment as head of state.

Taib had served as the state's chief minister for 33 years since March 1981. He has been replaced by his former brother-in-law Tan Sri Adenan Satem.

The EC had previously indicated that the Balingian by-election could be held on the same day as the Kajang by-election on March 23.

Among the candidates said to be vying for the seat is Taib's eldest son Datuk Seri Mahmud Abu Bekir.

This is the fourth by-election to be held since the 2013 general election.

The EC chairman announced that election officer Shafree Saili and three assistants would be appointed to conduct the polls.

"For the purpose of monitoring all campaigning activities throughout the official period, the EC will set up three campaign enforcement teams," he said.

Abdul Aziz said the Dewan Suarah Mesra Mukah will be used as a nomination centre, and a vote tallying centre.

"We have determined 21 polling centres for normal voting and one centre for advance voting.

"A total of 441 election workers will also be appointed to run the electoral process," he added.

He also estimated the by-election to cost RM910,213.

Abdul Aziz clarified that the Balingian by-election could not be held at the same time as the Kajang by-election as it was too short a notice.

"In terms of the law, there is no problem in having both by-elections on the same day.

"But technically, it is too short a notice and we do not have enough election workers to have it at one go," he said.

He also said that the challenge in conducting the Balingian by-election would be minimal, as the EC expected it to happen at least a month beforehand.

"It is in contrast with the Kajang by-election as we were quite shocked with the resignation of the incumbent Lee Chin Cheh," Abdul Aziz added.

According to the voter registry updated until February 27, Balingian had 13,666 registered voters, including 133 advance voters. – March 6, 2014.

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