

# Gaps needed between state polls amid rising Covid



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**Analysts opine the best time to hold the Sarawak state election would be end-December as the Melaka polls is on Nov 20**

**by ASILA JALIL / pic by MUHD AMIN NAHARUL**

THE Election Commission (EC) needs to consider a grace period between the Melaka and Sarawak state elections to minimise the impact on the healthcare system.

Analysts opined that the best time to hold the Sarawak state election would be end-December as the Melaka polls will end on Nov 20, 2021, thus giving sufficient time for preparation without affecting healthcare.

Socio-political analyst Assoc Prof Dr Awang Azman Awang Pawi said holding an election post-pandemic is becoming a new norm globally, which was evident in Japan that just had its general election last month, while South Korea will hold its presidential election in March next year.

“The best time to hold Sarawak state election is on Dec 18 or 19 to allow a grace period after the Melaka polls and avoid straining the healthcare system.

“Any political party would not condone the idea of a back-to-back election just for them to receive a new mandate to be bo in power,” he told *The Malaysian Reserve (TMR)*.



He said both by-elections will prove that the economic situation is recovering and boost investor's confidence towards Malaysia.

The EC has said that it will hold a special meeting on the 12th Sarawak state election on Nov 24 in Kuching.

Its secretary Datuk Ikmalrudin Ishak said the meeting, to be chaired by EC chairman Datuk Abdul Ghani Salleh, will start at 9am to discuss, among others, the important dates for the election.

The state poll is on the cards following the end of the emergency that was consented by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah and the dissolution of its State Legislative Assembly on Nov 3.

Concerns are rising on the possibility of back-to-back state polls considering Covid-19 cases are increasing in Malaysia, where a total of 6,517 cases were logged last Friday – the highest number since Oct 22.

According to Health DG Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, the country's infectivity rate (Rt value) has reached 1.0, indicating that there is a possibility of another Covid wave in the country. Malaysia's Rt value was 1.05 on Saturday.

Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president Dr Koh Kar Chai said the main concerns with regards to the elections is the level of compliance to the standard operating procedures by politicians and their supporters during the campaigning period.

"So far, there has been no super-spreader event reported in the state of Melaka, however, if one were to occur in Sarawak, it may be a major challenge to contain due to limited infrastructure and resources in healthcare, especially in the rural interiors," he told TMR.

Dr Koh hopes booster shots for the elderly, healthcare workers and high-risk groups will be expedited in the next few weeks to ensure maximum safety ahead of the by-election.

"We still maintain our stance that physical campaigning will not be a good idea. This may be viewed as limiting and restrictive, but necessary to prevent a super-spreader event.

"The EC, Sarawak political leaders, Ministry of Health and the state health department should meet and discuss ways that are safe to campaign and come to an agreement. The proposal to allow airtime on national TV and radio stations for political debates should be considered as among one of the safe ways to campaign," he added.

Universiti Utara Malaysia political analyst Prof Dr Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani told *TMR* that the EC requires sufficient time to prepare for the Sarawak election, mainly dealing with logistics due to the size of the state.

"The EC needs to take into account every factor before it decides on the date for the Sarawak state election. It would be best to have it by end-December during the school holidays," he said.

The Sarawak polls cannot be avoided because its State Legislative Assembly has been dissolved and the emergency period ended recently, he said.

"However, state elections like the one in Melaka should be avoided after this."

Early voting and polling for Melaka are slated on Nov 16 and Nov 20 respectively.

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