

Polling Day could fall on Sept 23

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Sept 23, a Saturday, is emerging as a possible day for Singaporeans to go to the polls to elect a new president, observers say.

There are three key days in the presidential electoral race: The issue of the Writ of Election, Nomination Day and Polling Day.

In February, when Parliament passed changes to the Presidential Election Act, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office Chan Chun Sing said the election would be pushed back to September so the campaigning period would not coincide with National Day celebrations in August.

There is a minimum 10-day period between Nomination Day and Polling Day, if there is a contest.

This means that Polling Day can be held on Sept 9, 16, 23 or 30 if campaigning is to be held next month.

Polling Day is typically held on a Saturday to minimise disruptions to schools that are used as polling stations and counting centres.

The Singapore Grand Prix will be held between Sept 15 and 17. Police resources have already been committed to the international event, making Polling Day on Sept 16 unlikely.

"Sept 30 will take us too close to the year end and major national exams," said Singapore Management University law don Eugene Tan.

The written papers of the Primary School Leaving Examination start on Thursday, Sept 28, this year.

The reserved election and higher eligibility criteria for private-sector candidates mean a "greater amount of documentation and certification", said Institute of Policy Studies deputy director Gillian Koh.

But speculation on the dates "may be moot" as the Presidential Election Committee may qualify only one candidate, said SMU's Professor Tan. "I think things are looking that way as Madam Halimah (Yacob) is the only one so far who qualifies outright."