

Will GE be at the end of May?

Last two weeks of May is when the General Election (GE) will be held, if history repeats itself.

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Mark the last two weeks of May on your calendar. That's when the General Election (GE) will be held, if history repeats itself.

Here's why:

- *The Budget goodies have been announced.
- *Familiar faces tipped as potential PAP candidates have been appearing at grassroots events.
- *And now, the Electoral Boundaries Report is out, a strong signal that the GE is near.

In 2006, Budget Day fell on Feb 17 and the electoral boundaries report came soon after on March 3. Growth Dividends - which cost the Government \$1.4 billion back then - were disbursed to all adult citizens on Labour Day, May 1, as part of a Progress Package.

Polling day followed soon after, on May 6. Dr Gillian Koh, senior research fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies, said that Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong will not stray far from the path he took back then.

Why not earlier?

March appears to be out as the Budget debate is scheduled from Feb 28 to March 10. Political observer Eugene Tan, a law lecturer at the Singapore Management University, said March is out because the Government would like the Budget passed by Parliament before it is dissolved.

April is crammed with school exams. May 1 is Labour Day and NTUC will be holding a big celebration to mark its 50th anniversary.

May 7 and 8 are out because PM Lee will be heading to Jakarta for the Asean Summit. Previous polls were held between 17 days and six months after the release of the boundaries report.

But do not expect the 19 days' lead time given during GE 1991. Back then, opposition parties accused the People's Action Party of unfair tactics by giving them little time to prepare.

Mr Tan added: "A late April GE remains a possibility notwithstanding the exams but I believe the Prime Minister will be receptive to the idea of letting the undergraduates participate fully in the electoral process (ranging from attending the rallies to voting) without having to be preoccupied with the exams."

June, he added, is unlikely in order not to disrupt holiday plans.

He said: "The May Day suite of programmes and activities provides an additional platform for the PAP to emphasise its commitment to the workers.

"Given the fairly major changes, a latter-half of May GE will give all parties a good two months to work the ground based on the new boundaries, and plan their electoral strategies."

Some of the recently-announced Budget goodies such as the Growth Dividends, Utilities-Save and Service & Conservancy Charges rebates will be disbursed by May 15.

Dr Koh said: "It is the PAP's prerogative to call the day of the GE. Their considerations might be whether their candidates are in place, how the budget is received and if they feel they have addressed the hot-button policy issues."

The issues include housing prices, foreigners and rising costs of living, she said.

She said: "I suppose on the part of citizens, they have been waiting for a long time for the elections.

"It maybe to the PAP's advantage that they can ride on a good year last year with the private sector giving out bonuses and the Government being able to afford to offer direct transfers to help citizens cope with the global rise in the price of food and oil."

Taxi driver David Cheong cannot wait. He wants to take his wife and 13-year-old son away for a short vacation during the June holidays.

But Mr Cheong, 56, also wants to be around to attend the campaign rallies, to soak up the election atmosphere and to vote. If he gets a chance to. Mr Cheong lives in Toa Payoh.

He said: "I didn't get to vote at the last elections. But I hope to do so this time round. I'd like to be around when that happens. So, no holiday for me and the family until after GE."