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NGOs have to register with EC to contest polls

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SEREMBAN, Sat. - Non-governmental organisations must register as political parties with the Registrar of Societies as well as the Election Commission before they can contest in elections.

EC secretary Datuk Wan Ahmad Wan Omar said they must also be prepared to change their identities in order to be able to do so.

"The requirement that they must register with the EC apart from Registrar is to ensure the EC is able to monitor their activities."

The additional requirement would also ensure independence and objectivity on the part of the NGOs.

Wan Ahmad said as long as they did not register as political parties, they could not contest in the elections.

"The EC's stand on this matter is the same as what that had been said by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad," Wan Ahmad said after witnessing the launching of a special counter for voters at Seremban post office by Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohd Isa Samad.

Also present was Pos Malaysia Berhad chief executive S.M. Haja Alawdin S.M. Sulaiman.

Yesterday, Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president and Barisan Nasional chairman, said NGOs must register as political parties in order to contest in elections.

The Prime Minister said if an NGO was not registered as a political party, its members could still contest the election in their individual capacity.

Dr Mahathir was commenting on a report in Utusan Malaysia which said that NGOs registered under the Societies Act could contest in the general election on condition that they registered with the EC.

Wan Ahmad said the EC had not received any reports on NGOs wanting to register as political parties thus far.

"Their struggles are different (from that of political parties) and I think, it is better that they remain that way."

There are now 10.1 million registered voters in the country.