

Proham wants EC members appointed by Parliament

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by Aidila Razak

The Association for the Promotion of Human Rights (Proham) today proposed to the parliamentary select committee on electoral reform that Parliament nominate members of the Election Commission (EC).

According to its representative Michael Yeoh (left in photo), this should be done through a parliamentary appointments committee consisting of members from opposition and government parties.

"This is for the chairperson, deputy chairperson and all commissioners. We leave the mechanism to the parliamentary appointments committee to decide but the appointment must be by Parliament," he said.

His colleague Ramon Navaratnam added that those nominated as EC members should also not be former civil servants as "intrinsically, they would not want to bite the hand that feeds them".

A former civil servant himself, he said that those who have spent decades in the service develop a sense of loyalty to the government of the day.

Currently, the EC chief, deputy chief and all five commissioners are appointed by the king on the recommendation of the government.

This was supported by Bersih 2.0 steering committee member Andrew Khoo, who in his submission, said that the EC appointments should not be seen as a "retirement benefit" for civil servants.

Electoral roll 'census' every 10 years

Proham also called for a new electoral roll to be produced every 10 years.

"I am referring to best practices. Many countries do this. Unless we do it, we will always be plagued with problems of absentee voters, dead voters, wrong addresses, etc," said Ramon.

"People who die, let them die. They can't be on the roll forever... We can undertake this like a national census."

Proham, which is made up of former commissioners of the Human Rights Commission (Suhakam), also supported the call for automatic registration and the lowering of the age threshold for eligibility to vote to 18.

Supporting Proham's case for automatic registration was Suhakam, who was represented today by commissioner Khaw Lake Tee.

The former dean of law at Universiti Malaya said that it is her academic view that the federal constitution need not be amended to make way for automatic registration.

However, the Suhakam argued that the age threshold should be kept at 21.

Suhakam also proposed that police permits need not be obtained for campaign rallies, with organisers made solely responsible for the event.

"The person organising it is held solely responsible for what happens at the assembly... there should be an undertaking if anything untoward happens, then they can face legal repercussions," she said. Speaking after the conclusion of the two-day Kuala Lumpur public hearings, PSC committee member Radzi Sheikh Ahmad said the committee's "focal points" are three issues pertaining to:

- * Automatic registration
- * Voting for Malaysians residing overseas
- * Use of indelible ink

The next public hearings are at Kota Kinabalu (Nov 25 and 26), Kuching (Dec 8 and 9), Penang (Dec 15 and 16), Kota Bharu (Jan 7 and 8) and Johor Bahru (Jan 12 and 13).

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