

Bersih 2.0 slams EC's 'no tax, no vote' proposal
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Election reforms pressure group Bersih 2.0 said the Election Commission's (EC) proposal to bar non-tax paying Malaysian expatriates from voting was unconstitutional.

In a statement today, the Bersih 2.0 steering committee said the EC's proposal ignored provisions in the federal constitution which clearly states that every citizen has the right to vote in any election.

"Many Malaysians who live in Malaysia do not pay tax as well... Many retirees do not pay income tax and those who earn less than RM2,500 do not pay any income tax.

"Are we going to exclude them as voters as well?" read the statement.

The steering committee also pointed to the Income Tax Act 1967, which stipulates that income derived from sources outside of Malaysia are exempted from income tax.

In view of these two legal arguments, Bersih 2.0 said that the EC was mounting an unconstitutional attempt to disenfranchise those eligible to vote.

EC keen on only 'two-and-a-half proposals'

On Monday, EC chairperson Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof said the United States had a similar system which only allowed its expatriates to vote should they be taxpayers.

He explained that voting rights should only be accorded to Malaysians who contribute to the country and return home periodically.

These were among the EC's proposals to the parliamentary select committee (PSC) on electoral reforms.

The EC is currently hammering out details for a set of reforms following the PSC's preliminary report on possible electoral reforms. Abdul Aziz said the reforms should be ready by March.

The PSC was established by the Najib Abdul Razak administration soon after the Bersih 2.0 rally in July last year. The PSC has been holding a series of public hearings throughout the country to source for feedback.

Meanwhile, Bersih 2.0 said that the EC has thus far only accepted "two and a half out of eight" of its demands, which it said was an indication of the commission's lack of will.

Its steering committee said the EC must act independently and fulfil its constitutional duties to ensure free and fair elections if it truly intends to gain the confidence of all Malaysians.

"Bersih 2.0 reminds the EC that it is not answerable to any political master but to ALL citizens of Malaysia," read the statement.