

## **EC's 'not taxpayer no voting right' bid slammed**

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Gerakan has ticked off the Election Commission's (EC) for its proposal that only taxpaying Malaysians living overseas are allowed to vote.

gerakan agm 151011 chang ko younlts deputy president Chang Ko Youn said in a statement yesterday that the move would stifle democrac, alienate Malaysians living abroad from the electoral process and discourage them from returning to the country.

Citing the Federal Constitution, Chang said, "It is very unfair to discriminate Malaysians over their right to vote based on their taxpaying status.

"The Election Commission must understand that the right to vote is part of the citizen's right and is not tied to the paying of taxes."

He also disagreed with the need for any test for Malaysians abroad to prove their attachment to the country, or that Malaysia necessarily needs to emulate other countries.

"I do not see a need to ape the American or Taiwanese systems. We are a sovereign and democratic nation, we should set our own rules," said Chang, who is also chairperson of the party's central bureau on the law and human rights.

He was also referring to the statement by MCA president Dr Chua Soi Lek, who cited the examples of the United States and Taiwan when expressing his support for the EC proposal.

EC chairperson Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof said on Monday that the US had a similar system, where only expatriates who are taxpayers can vote in elections.

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

A 'dim view' of democratic processes

In a separate statement yesterday, PKR's central leadership council member Elizabeth Wong said Aziz's proposal showed that the EC had a "dim view" of the democratic process.

"Even though the proposal is limited to overseas Malaysians for now, it nevertheless reflects on the EC's attitude towards voting - that it is a privilege, not a right.

"This marks a dangerous trend in Malaysian politics. Instead of strengthening our democracy by engaging more citizens to be part of the process and expanding the voter base, the EC seeks to go in reverse and take us back to the day when the right to vote is only limited to an elite few," Wong said.

Wong, who is a Selangor state executive councillor, also said it was not true that the US gave only taxpayers the right of being absentee votes because this conflicted with the 24th Amendment of the US Constitution.

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