

Conditions set for postal voters living abroad

MalaysiaKini.com

April 03, 2012

By Kuek Ser Kuang Keng

PSC REPORT Only overseas Malaysians who have registered as voters and who have returned home at least once in the previous five years will be eligible to register as postal voters, based on an Election Commission (EC) proposal.

NONEAccepting the conditions, the parliamentary select committee (PSC) on electoral reform has given the EC three months from today to discuss implementation with the relevant authorities.

Its report, presented to Parliament today, also said the move should be enforced through legislation.

The five-year period is to be calculated from before the date the elector applies to be a postal voter, said the report.

The PSC noted that it would be difficult for the EC to allow overseas citizens to vote at Malaysian missions abroad because of the current election system and logistics.

"This view is supported by feedback from the Foreign Affairs Ministry," the report stated.

The PSC suggested the EC should study an alternative, such as mailing the ballot papers to overseas voters. The Malaysian missions could then collect and mail these to the EC headquarter for counting.

Granting absentee voter status to Malaysians abroad to allow them to vote is one of eight demands of the electoral reform coalition Bersih 2.0.

NONEHowever, hurdles were raised to another Bersih 2.0 proposal to allow outstation voters, such as those from Sabah and Sarawak who live or work in the peninsula, to vote without returning to their constituency.

The PSC report said this would be tedious in terms of logistics and human resource needs, while current legal provisions pose additional difficulty to implementation, going by the EC's testimony to the panel.

Article 119 of the federal constitution and election regulations do not currently allow voters to vote outside their registered constituency, the EC had said.

The PSC took note that the proposal requires further study on whether amendments are required to the constitution and election laws.

It proposed that the EC should study the best method for outstation voters, such as early voting as practised for Malaysians based abroad. No time frame has been set for implementation.

Postal voting for EC staff, media

Despite objection from three opposition members in the PSC - Anthony Loke (DAP-Rasah), Hatta Ramli (PAS-Kuala Krai) and Azmin Ali (PKR-Gombak) - the majority of its members voted to allow EC staff and media practitioners who are on duty on polling day to register as postal voters.

azlanThe trio had demanded that these personnel should cast their ballots via the early voting system, which will be introduced for security personnel in the next general election.

The EC had earlier rejected the proposal on the ground that it would be impossible to gather journalists -

who are scattered around the country during the election campaign period - at certain centres for early voting.

Other PSC members are Maximus Johnity Ongkili (chairperson, BN-Kota Marudu), Mohd Radzi Sheikh Ahmad (BN-Kangar), Fong Chan Onn (BN- Alor Gajah), Alexander Nanta Linggi (BN-Kapit), P Kamalanathan (BN-Hulu Selangor) and Wee Choo Keong (Independent-Wangsa Maju).

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/193934>

