

EC rejects six out of 10 preliminary proposals

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PSC REPORT The Election Commission (EC) had completely or partially rejected six of 10 interim electoral reforms proposed last year by the parliamentary select committee (PSC).

NONEThis has raised doubts as to whether the six-month effort of the PSC in putting together its final report will bring about significant changes to the electoral system.

The question is whether the EC will throw its full support behind the bipartisan committee's 22 recommendations that were presented to the Dewan Rakyat today.

In explaining why it had rejected the recommendations in the interim report, the EC had cited constitutional and legal constraints, logistics and practicality.

According to the final report, the EC had recorded its objections to these recommendations:

1. Granting absentee voter status to overseas Malaysians

The EC refused to expand the category of absentee voters to all overseas Malaysians as well as allow them to vote early at Malaysian missions abroad due to logistics issues and practicality.

However, the EC suggested postal voting facilities be provided to them, subject to certain conditions that are still being finalised. Two of these conditions are that overseas citizens are registered as voters and have returned home at least once in the last five years.

2. Allowing outstation voters to vote without having to return to their constituencies

The EC refused to implement this in the next general election, but it agreed to further study the proposal in relation to Article 119 of the federal constitution, which stipulates that an eligible voter must be a resident in his or her voting constituency.

3. Application to change voting address must be attached with a statutory declaration

This proposal is to eliminate the problem of voters using false addresses to change their voting constituencies.

But the EC argued that it would be a burden to voters because a statutory declaration must be made in front of a commissioner of oaths, whose service is limited to certain areas.

4. Verification of the Sabah electoral roll

The PSC raised this proposal after it was alleged that many questionable names were found in the roll.

However the EC rejected this and said it would focus on efforts to clean up the electoral roll of Sabah with the help of the National Registration Department.

5. Abolish the RM10 objection fee

This proposal aims to facilitate members of the public in raising objections to dubious names published in the supplementary electoral roll draft. However, the EC's argument is that it "is not a body that can generate income".

6. Amend laws to allow objections to the master electoral roll

The EC disagrees with this.

The court lost its power to question the master electoral roll when the government through Parliament added an ouster clause, Section 9A, to the Election Act 1958 in 2002. This was done after the High Court declared the Likas by-election result null and void due to 4,197 questionable names in the electoral roll.

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