

**Ensure access to media during polls, gov't told**  
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**By Lee Long Hui**

Independent Media Activists (or Kami by the Malay acronym) said the government must ensure that all political parties and their candidates can promote their election manifesto on television and radio, as well as publish advertisements during a campaign period.

None Failing this, suggested Ahmad Lutfi Othman (right) who heads the group, the Election Commission (EC) should extend the campaign period beyond the minimum 10 days recommended by the parliamentary select committee (PSC) on electoral reform.

He told a press conference yesterday that this "alternative" is necessary because parties and candidates do not have much time to promote their pledges whenever election campaigns are short.

"If the media can give fair and just coverage to all political parties contesting an election, then the 10-day period can be taken into account," he said.

"But with the current situation, I feel that the issue of 10 days will never be raised and (therefore, the recommendation is) not relevant."

None Lutfi said he is disappointed with the PSC for not coming up with "concrete proposals that would have pressured the EC" into raising the issue of free, impartial and fair access with the Home Ministry and Information, Communications and Culture Ministry.

He referred to page 37 of the report, in which the PSC merely "noted" the importance of free and fair access to the media and suggested that the EC communicates with the relevant agencies to ensure this is achieved by all political parties.

"I don't see serious pressure to ensure that the people, mainly voters, have a right to receive fair, free and comprehensive information," Lutfi said.

Kami to press for change

Kami, he said, will submit a memorandum on its position to the two ministries, as well as to Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim and Pakatan Rakyat MPs.

press freedomThe group also plans to form a coalition of stakeholders and to hold a convention on World Press Freedom Day, observed on May 3 each year.

Lutfi, who is chief editor of the PAS mouthpiece Harakah, reiterated calls for the abolition of all laws that suppress media freedom before the next general election.

These include the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984, Official Secrets Act 1972 and Internal Security Act 1960.



