

Advance voting will aid BN's victory, claims PKR
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While both Bersih and opposition parties welcome the introduction of advance voting, a PKR leader warns that the lack of clear procedures in implementation makes it vulnerable to vote rigging, thus favouring the BN.

PKR deputy secretary-general Steven Choong, who specialises in polling agents training, pointed out that the two amendments to the Election (Conduct of Election) Regulations 1981 in February and April this year failed to address the integrity of the process of advance voting.

Among the glaring weaknesses is the absence of provisions detailing its voting procedures and making indelible ink mandatory to advance voters before the issuance of ballot papers.

"The Election Commission (EC) had previously stated that indelible ink would be used for advance voters but the first amendment referred entirely to normal voters.

"The second amendment though was mainly on advance voting but failed to mention a single word on the voting procedures.

"Hence there is uncertainty on the use of indelible ink on advance voters... and 100 percent turn-out for advance voters could be achieved through impersonation," he said in a statement yesterday.

Advance voting will be introduced in the next general election to replace the much-disputed postal voting, but the latter will still be available for a smaller number of police and military personnel, election commission officers and journalists who are unable to vote in advance.

Mischief hidden in amendments

According to Choong, the second amendment introduced three new regulations to cover advance voting: regulation 27A defines the persons required to vote as advance voters;

- regulation 27B covers the safe custody of the advance ballot box; and,
- regulation 27C explains the counting of votes of advance voters.

Although regulation 27C states that all the procedures apply to the counting of normal votes shall apply to the counting of advance votes, Choong noted the absence of no similar new regulation to stipulate that the normal voting procedures shall also apply to the advance voting procedures.

"Without a specific new regulation similar to 27C on voting procedures, it is uncertain whether the EC is managing the voting procedures inside an army camp or police quarters.

"The existing postal voting regulations are also silent as to who should manage the voting procedures inside an army camp or police quarters," he explained.

In previous elections, postal voting process was wholly managed by the military force and police inside the army camps and police quarters.

This had led to allegations of votes rigging due to the absence of monitoring as many candidates or their agents were unaware that they need to apply for special entry permit from the defence ministry and home ministry to enter army camps or police quarters to monitor the voting process, elaborated Choong.

Change for the worse

"Hence the strategies of the non-BN parties would be to reject as many ballot papers as possible during the opening of postal envelopes stage," he said.

He described as a classic case the 2010 Sibu by-election where DAP won through the rejection of a big number of postal ballot papers at that stage.

Choong pointed out that the introduction of advance voting will get rid of the use of envelopes and declaration forms as required under postal voting, but voting procedures are left silent as in postal voting.

"Hence the EC is clearly assisting the BN to completely remove the risk of any ballot papers being rejected before counting commences but still retaining the power to manage the advance voting procedures at the hands of armed forces and police.

"By not clearly defining the voting procedures for advance voting in the army camps or police quarters, the EC is clearly seen to have purposely designed it this way to allow votes rigging to be perpetuated," he stressed.

Choong also revealed that although regulation 27C stipulates that the counting procedures of normal votes shall apply to that of advance votes, it does not explicitly state where the advance votes will be counted, which election officer will supervise the process, and where the advance votes ballot boxes will be kept.

"To sum it all up, the two amendments to Election Regulations 1981 and the recently passed amendment to Election Offences Act have demonstrated that the EC has done nothing apart from allowing vote rigging to be perpetuated," he said.