

Findings on same-address voters incorrect, claims EC

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In an attempt to refute all the allegations of electoral fraud, the Election Commission (EC) has claimed that the findings from Mimos' audit on the electoral roll were incorrect.

Mimos is a government-owned technology company engaged by the parliamentary select committee (PSC) on electoral reform to conduct an audit on the much-disputed electoral roll.

The audit has discovered many cases where large number of voters were registered under a single address.

According to Mimos, there were 820 cases where more than 100 voters were found to be residing at the same address, 1,259 cases where between 51-100 voters are staying at the same address, another 3,254 cases where there are between 21-50 voters in the same place, and 6,002 cases involving between 11 and 20 voters who have the same addresses.

In a booklet entitled '*The Truth Behind the Accusations and Lies Towards the Election Commission*' published recently, the EC said Mimos had mistaken locality with address.

Those voters were actually registered under the same locality, which consists of many addresses, but Mimos wrongly understood the locality as a single address.

“What has happened is that Mimos had misunderstood the large number of electors in a locality, so as to mean that all the electors in that locality are registered under one address.

“The fact is that the EC places the registered electors in the appropriate locality which in turn will be placed under the appropriate polling district and the polling centre.

“As such, the EC has established the policy to place electors with different addresses but within the same locality in that locality,” read the booklet.

Locality constitutes the smallest unit

It further pointed out that in the election map, the locality constitutes the smallest unit and consists of several addresses.

The combination of several adjacent localities will constitute the polling district, and the combination of several polling districts will constitute a state constituency; while one or more state constituencies will constitute a parliamentary constituency.

“For example, the locality of Kampung Melayu Majidee in Johor was assumed to have just one address with more than 100 electors.

“In reality, this locality has tens of complete addresses, as well as incomplete addresses that have all been combined to form a locality, i.e., Kampung Melayu Majidee. Mimos had misinterpreted this to mean one address when in fact it is a locality under a polling district,” it said.

The 15-page booklet, which can be accessed from the EC website, addressed 12 allegations recently raised by the opposition and electoral reform coalition Bersih.

On the issue of increasing the number of its officers registered as postal voters to 240,000 in the coming general election, the EC explained that it has done its best to minimise the number.

The current law allows election officers on duty on polling day to apply to vote by post.

The EC stressed that it would do its best to arrange for EC staff to be on duty at a polling centre where they are registered as voters, or a polling centre which is nearby to their registered polling centre, so they can vote on the polling day.

“It is the practice of the EC to try and identify people from a polling district and appoint them as staff of the polling station for that polling district. This would enable them to vote as ordinary voters on polling day.

“However, one must be aware that for the 13th general election, the EC would have to appoint a large number of workers. Therefore, it would be very difficult to ensure that those appointed as EC workers in each polling station would be registered electors from the respective polling district or even nearby polling districts,” it said.

The opposition had questioned the hike in the number of EC officers registered as postal voters, saying that it will make a big impact on the 13th general election, and strengthen the prejudice of the people against the EC as wanting to ensure the victory of a particular party or coalition.

Responding to another allegation that it has failed to ensure fair media access for all parties throughout an election, the EC reiterated that the matter is out of its purview.

“The power to control the media during an election is not under the authority and responsibility of the EC, what more with privately-owned media, as each has its own policies and approaches as regards its support and attitude towards the issues raised during elections.

“Thus, they are free to report according to their interests. There is no legal provision that provides the EC with the power to control any media to ensure that they provide equal access to all the parties contesting in the elections,” the commission explained.

Effort to create equal media access

However, for the coming general election, the EC said it will discuss with the relevant agencies in its effort to create space and equal access to the public media for all the parties contesting in the elections.

“In addition, the EC will also discuss with the owners of several private media groups (electronic and print media) to obtain their cooperation to create fair access to the media for all political parties and candidates contesting in the elections,” it added.

Last week an international fact-finding mission on Malaysian electoral system pointed out that Article 115(2) of the constitution which states that “All public authorities shall on the request of the (Election) Commission give the commission such assistance in the discharge of its duties as may be practicable” can be used by the electoral body to ensure fair reporting.

But the EC deputy chairperson, Wan Ahmad Wan Omar, reportedly told the mission that the Article empowers the EC to obtain “only logistical assistance”.

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