

## **Wanted: 'Non-partisan' NGOs as polls observers**

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**By Kuek Ser Kuang Keng**

The Election Commission (EC) will appoint election observers from 'non-partisan' local NGOs who are not bent on just criticising the commission.

The EC's counterparts in several other countries, who have invited the commission to observe elections in their respective countries, will also be invited as international observers.

Such countries includes Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, Australia and United Kingdom.

The EC deputy chairperson Wan Ahmad Wan Omar made this announcement today during a luncheon talk at a Kuala Lumpur hotel.

The three-hour entitled 'Bersih 3.0: What else you want?' talk was organised by the Department of Special Affairs (JASA), an agency under the Information, Communication and Culture Ministry, and the Institute of Mind Development (Inmind), and attended by many JASA officers.

"They understand elections and they come with clear understanding. They are the 'election men' in their countries," he said.

Wan Ahmad said that the likes of the six-member international fact-finding mission commissioned by opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim will not be invited because their sole purpose was to run down the EC.

"Don't invite NGOs which want to criticise the EC. Those are the ones that (Bersih co-chairperson) Ambiga Sreenevasan wants to invite."

### **Funding for NGOs**

He said the EC has identified six "prestigious and responsible" local NGOs, and will meet them this month to get their feedback on how they can help the EC to monitor the 13th general election.

"We want NGOs which secure the confidence of all Malaysians, which have been proven as non-partisan."

"They have expertise and experience in elections," he added, but declined to reveal the NGOs at this juncture.

These NGOs, he said, will have to comply with all the conditions set by the EC which prohibit them from 'playing politics', campaigning for political parties and openly criticising the commission.

Wan Ahmad also lambasted an unnamed NGO, which he said was given official accreditation as

an election observer, but failed to submit any report and instead criticised the EC in public.

"We don't want NGO like this."

It was clear that Wan Ahmad was referring to Malaysians for Free and Fair Elections (Mafrel), who received official observer status in several by-elections.

Wan Ahmad said that the NGOs appointed as official observers will be given funding in order to recruit volunteers.

On the international mission, Wan Ahmad further commented that it came to Malaysia merely as an "international endorsement" to justify the Bersih movement.

"They have no election background and don't know the circumstances of our nation... They were invited by the opposition leader, so who paid them? I don't know.

"The EC was pleased to meet them and explain to them, but when they came out with their interim report, it was exactly the same as Bersih's demands," he said.