

## **Poser over army, police voters not irregular, says EC**

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**By Kuek Ser Kuang Keng**

Retired army and police personnel who are still registered as postal voters, as well as new army and police postal voters who are above the recruitment age, are not irregular, said the Election Commission (EC).

EC deputy chairperson Wan Ahmad Wan Omar explained the two allegations raised by researcher Ong Kian Ming, whom Wan Ahmad said has never approached the EC for any comment before making the allegations to attack the EC's integrity.

"If Dr Ong comes to the EC, we can discuss and explain to him, but he has an agenda, he never comes to the EC," Wan Ahmad said during a press conference in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

In his two-part commentary published in *Malaysiakini* early last month, Ong (*right*) found 44 names of police postal voters who were above the retirement age of 58.

Ong is the Malaysian Electoral Roll Analysis Project (Merap) director, who is assisting Bersih to analyse the much-disputed electoral roll.

Wan Ahmad explained that the current law only allows postal voters themselves to change their voting status back to normal voters.

"When he retires, his name is still in the postal voter list. Only he can change it back (to normal voter). If he forgets, and the Defence Ministry does not give us the list of retired army personnel, his name will remain on the postal voter list," he said.

He stressed that all retired personnel who have registered as postal voters have the right to vote, and it should not be denied.

Another of Ong's finding was that the ages of more than 200 ordinary voters who converted to postal voters because they had joined the army in the third quarter of 2011 have exceeded the army recruitment age of 30.

These over-aged recruits were then moved to another constituency in the fourth quarter of 2011, said Ong.

However, Wan Ahmad claimed that these are members of a special border regiment who come from Wataniah (Territorial Army Regiment).

He elaborated that members of Wataniah, which is the military reserve force of the Malaysian army, can only register as ordinary voters.

Some of them are later absorbed into the border regiment although they have passed the

recruitment age, thus they are entitled to be converted into postal voters, said Wan Ahmad.

The press conference was called after Wan Ahmad delivered a lengthy three-hour talk entitled 'Bersih 3.0: What else you want?'

It was organised by the Department of Special Affairs (Jasa) - an agency under the Information, Communications and Culture Ministry - and the Institute of Mind Development (Inmind), and it was attended by mostly government officials.

'Allegations due to lack of understanding'

During his speech, Wan Ahmad said Ong's allegations of electoral irregularities are the result of his lack of understanding of the issue.

"He just wants to destroy the electoral roll so the people will hate the EC, and the hatred will be translated to votes... that's all."

On another issue raised by Ong that 3.1 million voters were identified as potential non-resident voters by the National Registration Department (NRD) in 2002, Wan Ahmad argued that it was not an irregularity but the result of the current electoral system.

He explained that the laws allow voters to have different MyKad address and voting address, coupled by the high rate of internal migration in Malaysia, hence the large number of non-resident voters.

Wan Ahmad clarified the allegation by PAS Youth that 240,000 EC officers will be registered as postal voters during the next general election, and it will make a big impact on the general election.

"It is not true that all 240,000 will apply to voter as postal voters. Only part of them will do so."

He also revealed part of the latest progress in the implementation of the 22 recommendations raised by the parliamentary select committee (PSC) on electoral reform.

According to him, the EC has accepted PSC's proposal to allow overseas Malaysians to vote as postal voters and the relevant legal amendment is under way.

But he accused that electoral reform coalition Bersih, which first advocated the idea, has a political agenda in pushing the proposal.

"Their agenda is that they think overseas Malaysians are anti-government, so they can get more votes (by allowing them to vote from abroad)."

Wan Ahmad repeatedly stressed that the EC is incapable of refuting the false allegations from the opposition and Bersih due to its insufficient manpower and resources.

However, with PSC's recommendation to allocate more budget and manpower to the EC, the commission plans to form a communication team to battle the slander and lies by Bersih, the opposition and “anti-EC social media and Internet media”, he said.

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