

5 NGOs to act as local monitors for GE13

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The Election Commission (EC) has selected five local NGOs as observers to monitor the next general election, but they will have to abide by its conditions including a gag order against speaking to the media.

According to a New Straits Times report, the groups are the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (Ideas), independent pollster Merdeka Centre, Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (Asli), Transparency International Malaysia (TI-M) and the Association for the Promotion of Human Rights (Proham).

Both Ideas and Asli are private think-tanks while Proham is a human rights body comprising former commissioners of the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia.

EC chief Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof said they have been selected because they are deemed to be non-partisan and professional bodies.

“As far as the EC is concerned, we have nothing to hide. This is why we hope to have local and international observers at the 13th general election,” he was quoted as saying.

However, the EC has set terms and conditions for the five NGOs.

“They are not allowed to stop or interfere in the election process. Most importantly, they are not allowed to speak to the media or give statements regarding the election,” said Abdul Aziz.

He did not reveal the status of Malaysians for Free and Fair Elections (Mafrel), the election monitoring group once appointed by the EC but later accused as being biased and pro-opposition.

Mafrel had released statement attacking the EC and the election process after monitoring several by-elections.

On international observers, Abdul Aziz said countries that had invited Malaysia as observers in their elections will be invited to send monitors.

“Regionally, all Asean members will be invited except for Brunei, which does not have elections, and Singapore, which rejected our accreditation application to become an observer in its recent election,” he was quoted as saying.

He said the EC is also looking at inviting various international bodies, such as the UN.

‘Give manifesto plan a chance’

In another report published by Malay daily Sinar Harian, Abdul Aziz called on political parties to accept the proposal to air pre-recorded party manifestos over Radio Television Malaysia during the next general election campaign.

Responding to PAS' statement yesterday that this could lead to messages being edited and becoming distorted, Abdul Aziz said he wants Pakatan Rakyat to give the initiative a chance before casting doubts on it.

“I have put in (much) effort to obtain the space. It is better for us to use this chance first before making negative comments,” he added.

“Let's try first. If what has been said by the relevant quarters is (proven) true, they can comment on it (later).”

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