

Bersih: Let both sides present manifestos 'live'

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By Koh Jun Lin

Both sides of the political divide should be given the opportunity to present their election manifestos on 'live' primetime television with the presentations handled by an independent moderator, said Bersih co-chairperson Ambiga Sreenevasan.

"It is like a debate, but since they don't like the word 'debate', we can do it in a different way by moderating a session where each party is allowed to present their manifesto.

"We would suggest that as a start, they should do that. But really, for a true democracy, there should be equal access (to the media)," she said at a press conference today.

She was responding to the Information Ministry's plan to only allow a 10-minute pre-recorded message for each party to broadcast on government-owned media, which she said was "ridiculous".

Pakatan Rakyat has rejected the Information Ministry's proposal as a "mockery of the democratic system", only to earn Information Minister Rais Yatim's rebuke that the coalition is being arrogant.

Ambiga (left) said this when fielding reporters' questions regarding to what extent has Bersih's eight election demands been met, in view of the fact that the parliament has been dissolved and elections must take place in 60 days from then.

Her response, amongst others, is that it is now too late to make changes to the electoral roll, and focus should now be given to measures that can be put into effect immediately, such as ensuring free and fair access to the media for all political parties.

She said of Bersih's eight demands, such as the use of indelible ink, overseas voting, and a minimum of 21 days for campaigning, only the first had been met.

Bersih had previously expressed reservations regarding the implementation of the indelible ink system, which remains unaddressed. These include the fact that voters are marked with the ink before, not immediately after, they have cast their vote.

Although the Election Commission has allowed more Malaysian expats to vote via postal ballot, she reiterated that its implementation has been rushed after a year-long delay.

"As far as we are concerned, there are problems because it is so rushed that we don't know if everyone had a chance to register, people did not even understand what they needed to do, not enough information was given, and there were problems.

"There is no need for it to be so last-minute. They had promised to do this a year ago, but

they have only done it so close to the elections," she said.

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