

'15 days not enough for campaigning'

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By Susan Loone

While the campaign period of 15 days for the upcoming general election is the longest since 1982, Penang caretaker Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said this has fallen short of demands.

"We regret it is only 15 days. We had hoped that it would be 21 days, according to (coalition for clean and fair election) Bersih demands," he told a press conference today.

"We feel that the media, controlled by BN, has not given enough fair coverage to the (federal) opposition or to the (Penang) state government. That is why we feel we need more time (to campaign).

"Although the Election Commission (EC) has added two days to the 2008 (campaign period), it is not adequate."

The EC announced today that it has fixed April 20 for nominations and May 5 for the 13th general election.

Lim, who is DAP secretary-general, expressed hope that the EC will ensure the independence of the media and other government agencies over the campaign period.

He reiterated his condemnation of the 10 minutes allotted by the Information, Communications and Culture Ministry for political parties to pre-record and broadcast their manifesto on television.

Repeating his sentiment that this is an "insult to the election and democratic process", Lim said media freedom is for all times, "not only for 10 minutes on TV".

Lim also asked that May 5, a Sunday, be declared a public holiday as it is a working day in the states of Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu.

"Although, this does not concern Penang, we hope it will be done for (those) states which do not observe their day off on Sunday, (to) be fair to all."

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