

Christians unhappy with EC's Sunday polling date

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By Dukau Papau

The Election Commission's decision to schedule Sunday May 5 as polling day has drawn fire from a majority of Christians in Sarawak for it appears as if the electoral body is insensitive about them.

They feel that the commission has forgotten that Malaysia is a multi-religious and multi-racial nation where about 10 percent of the 28 million of the population is Christian.

"Setting May 5, a Sunday, as polling day for the 13th general election clearly shows that the Election Commission (EC) is insensitive to the needs of the rural folk in Sarawak and Sabah who are mostly Christians," said DAP Sarawak secretary Chong Chieng Jen (left in photo).

"I received many complaints immediately after the EC announced the nomination and polling dates.

"It is causing inconveniences to our supporters, voters and even our volunteers," he said, pointing out that most rural natives are Christians with church services in the morning with many having to travel a long distances to vote.

"In addition, polling stations in some rural areas close at about 1 or 2pm," he said at a press conference.

Polling times a bother

Jossem Daweg, a devout Christian, said that he and many of others like him are unhappy because the commission either purposely or otherwise failed to remember that Sunday is a day of worship for Christians.

"There are so many dates from Monday to Saturday the commission could have chosen. But why Sunday? This really puzzles me," said Jossem, an ex-army personnel.

Polling stations, he said would open as early as 8am and close at 5pm. Polling stations catering for a small number of voters close as early as 1 pm.

"Some of the Christian voters will be still in the church," he said, pointing out that

even if polling stations close late, it would difficult for them to readjust their times as they do not know how long it would take to cast their ballots.

Jossem said, "I believe that many Christians will miss their Sunday service on that day which is wrong because every Christian should be in Church on Sunday.

"The Bible says God created the earth and skies in six days and rested on the seventh.

"Likewise the scripture also reminded all Christians to respect Sunday as rest day while some regard it as a holy day to worship and praise God."

Take note advice

"I am not speaking for myself, but for all Christians in the country. And we appeal to the Commission to reconsider having polling on any other day except Sunday.

"Even if it cannot change the date now at least it has to take note for future elections. There is no point proclaiming 1Malaysia if we cannot respect the rights of others," he said in a statement.

The secretary of Association of Churches in Sarawak (ACS) Ambrose Linang said that ACS which represents about 60 percent of the state's Christians will issue a statement later.

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