

Dirty thumbs for cleaner polls
Malaysiakini.com
March 7, 2007
Bede Hong

An election watchdog wants voters to dip their thumbs in indelible ink after casting their ballots in the coming general elections.

Calling itself Bersih, the watchdog comprising opposition parties and 50 non-government organisations, said if the Election Commission (EC) enforces this, it will effectively end multiple voting.

"This is the most easily achievable task, something that the commission can implement by the next general elections. That is why we prioritised it," said Bersih steering committee member Sivarasa Rasiah at a press conference in Kuala Lumpur today.

As immediate steps, Bersih also urged the EC to clean up the electoral roll and drop postal voting.

Multiple voting and phantom voting are major problems plaguing the Malaysian electoral system.

Another, is the outdated electoral roll. Currently voters are required to register with the EC, before being informed of their gazetted polling stations. Last year, the EC admitted that over 180,000 deceased voters were registered as legitimate voters.

If postal voting is not abolished, Bersih said observers should be allowed to monitor the voting process.

"In the last polls, we were allowed to be present during the counting process. We want to be there during the (voting) process," said Sivarasa, who is also Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) vice-president.

"We chose these measures because they can be applied regardless of when the elections might be called," he added.

Roadshows and forums

Also present at the press conference were steering committee members DAP MP Teresa Kok and human rights activist K Shan. The watchdog is expected to deliver their demands to EC chief chairperson Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman soon.

Bersih also announced that it will hold nationwide road shows and public forums to garner public support for its electoral reforms call.

"It's time for Abdul Rashid not to take the attitude that 'I'm a bureaucrat working for the ruling party'. He must understand his role is guaranteed under the constitution, not just any common law, and he should act accordingly," said Sivarasa.

Abdul Rashid has served with the commission for nearly three decades. In 2003, he described the commission as not independent. In January this year, he said current election

laws are no longer relevant and made a call for reforms.

Last December, another election watchdog Malaysians for Free and Fair Elections (Mafrel) made 30 recommendations to overhaul the electoral system.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.

Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/64215>