

'Scrutinise the next delineation exercise'
Malaysiakini.com
Disember 8, 2010

Bersih 2.0 chief Ambiga Sreenevasan has cautioned voters to look out for possible gerrymandering when the Election Commission (EC) next conducts a delineation exercise.

NONE Ambiga said the exercise is scheduled to be held around next March, as the last one was conducted in March 2003.

The EC typically conducts the exercise every eight years. At the latest, this should be done 10 years from the last exercise.

Claiming that the previous exercise had been "badly conducted", Ambiga said Bersih had provided proof about several irregularities at a three-hour meeting with the EC last month.

"We shared our research, presented slides on the delineation process in 2003. There were astoundingly unusual features, (with) some (constituencies) crossing (boundaries of) local authorities and (creating) funny shapes," she told the 'Rakyat Demands Electoral Reform' forum in Penang yesterday.

"(When) we put them up for the EC to see, they were taken aback because it showed how badly (the exercise) was carried out."

Ambiga also launched Bersih 2.0 and presented the election watchdog's 11-point demand for electoral reform during the forum, at which about 100 people were present.

NONE With her were PKR vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar; Penang exco for local government, traffic management and environment Chow Kon Yeow; forum chairperson Dr Toh Kin Woon; and organiser Sembang-Sembang group representative Khim Pa.

'Version 1' of Bersih, launched on Nov 10 in Kuala Lumpur, was responsible for organising a huge rally in 2007 that drew tens of thousands of yellow-clad protestors. They marched to Istana Negara to petition the Agong to intervene in bringing about electoral reform.

Ambiga said the public is generally unaware about what a delineation exercise means or how it works, although they understand that it can make a difference to election results.

While the exercise is intended to ensure that every vote carries the same weight, she said this does not happen in some constituencies in Malaysia.

She cited the example of Putrajaya (with 6,608 voters) and Kampar (112,224 voters), saying there was no way that votes in both constituencies would have the same weightage.

"This must be avoided, we must tend toward equal weightage, only then the election results can be more reflective of what the people want," she said.

'Lodge objections'

She also warned the public about gerrymandering, where boundaries are redrawn to assist a particular party to win.

Ambiga said that guidelines under the federal constitution state how delineation exercises should be done.

"Each constitution should have an equal number of voters ... taking into account community interest and technical matters...but the tendency must be towards equality. (But) this has been breached all over Malaysia," she noted.

Bersih 2.0 will continue to educate the people on the delineation exercise as there is a lot that the public can do to prevent gerrymandering, said Ambiga.

"Under the federal constitution, it is stated that once the EC decides on delineation, they can get feedback from the public," she said.

"If more than 100 members object to the delineation, the EC must hold an enquiry. (Of course) they can ignore you and go ahead with what they are doing, but it means that now they have to justify why they did not take your feedback into account."

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