

Govt not afraid to lower voting age

PM wants to hasten process but EC facing difficulty due to pandemic

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PAGOH: The Perikatan Nasional government is not afraid over the lowering of the minimum voting age to 18 and wants the Election Commission (EC) to hasten the implementation process on automatic voter registration (AVR).

Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said he recently met with EC chairman Datuk Abdul Ghani Salleh and accepted the latter's explanation over the matter.

He rubbished allegations by certain quarters that Perikatan had influenced the delay. He said the EC had considered many factors before making the decision.

"This is not about the Perikatan government but about the EC and their efforts to solve the problem and the difficulty of doing it during a pandemic," he added.

Muhyiddin said he had asked Abdul Ghani if the EC was able to hasten the matter from the earliest date they had given, which was on Sept 1, 2022.

"Next year is the earliest that they can do it. I even asked if they can do it by September this year but they



said they were unable to, so how can we force them?

"I accepted the EC's explanation but I do hope they are able to hasten it," he said at a press conference after launching the Pagoh Special Economic Zone here on Saturday.

Muhyiddin added that Abdul Ghani had also explained that

carrying out the AVR did not just involve the EC but also other bodies as well.

"Take the National Registration Department, for example. The process of registering voters automatically would require the department to check eligible voters' MyKad details against their home address

and with millions of voters on the list, the workload would be immense and take a considerable amount of time.

"So while we are all emotional about it, it is not about the government being afraid that once the youth are registered they will not support Perikatan.

"I believe that the majority of youth support the present government and faster would be better but what can we do.

"We have to be realistic about it and it has nothing to do with it being political," he said, urging people to let the EC do their job.

On July 16, 2019, the historic Bill was passed to lower the voting age from 21 to 18, as well as to implement AVR.

But on Thursday, the EC announced that the lowering of the minimum voting age and AVR could only be done by Sept 1, 2022.

Meanwhile, on another matter, Muhyiddin, who is also Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu) president, said he has no issue with whether Umno wants to cooperate with his party or not.

"We have formed a good relationship with all parties, which led to the formation of Perikatan, but what is important right now is how we face the future," he added.

He urged politicians to put the rakyat's interest first, including solving the Covid-19 pandemic, perfecting the vaccination rollout and strengthening the rakyat's livelihood.

The people's leader:

Muhyiddin having a discussion with villagers during a breakfast session at Felcra Bukit Kepong in Muar. - THOMAS YONG/The Star