

Bersih: Use indelible ink until biometric reliability proven

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SHAH ALAM, July 26 — Electoral reform group Bersih said today the use of indelible ink remains the cheapest and most effective way to prevent fraud, but it is still open to the proposed biometric system as long as it can be implemented in a transparent manner.

Bersih chairman Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan raised concerns whether the proposed biometric system could be implemented before the next general election, and also whether the system would rely on data from the National Registration Department (NRD).



Ambiga said the EC must furnish to the public more details on the biometric system before rushing to implement it. — Picture by Choo Choy May

The Election Commission (EC), she said, must furnish to the public more details on the biometric system before rushing to implement it.

“The EC must explain everything in full; will it be ready by GE13?”

“The data has to also be of integrity; will it rely on data provided from the NRD? If the biometric system is tied to the NRD, and if the department cannot determine which voters are deceased, then this is a grave concern,” she said during a public forum here with EC deputy chairman Datuk Wira Wan Ahmad Wan Omar.

Ambiga said the EC should be open to the option of indelible ink, adding that this was a cheap and effective solution.

“If GE is soon, I do not think the biometric system can be implemented. You have to do dry runs throughout the country, and explain how it works. Will it also be tamper-proof?” she said.

The former Bar Council chairman also stressed the need for automatic voter registration, saying that the election system should be geared towards making sure those age 21 and above should vote.

"The whole process (biometric system) must also be transparent, from the tender process to the implementation," she said.

In response, Wan Ahmad said the biometric system would be the "best way" to solve the problems concerning the current electoral roll.

"Through fingerprint scans, no two persons will have the same biometry. When it is ready, the biometric system will be matched with 12 million registered voters," he said.

But the EC deputy head was mum when asked by reporters later whether it could implement the new system by the next general election.

"Elections are up to when Parliament is dissolved... We can only speculate, but we don't know when that is," he told a news conference.

Bersih claimed that 50,000 people showed up for its July 9 rally for electoral reforms despite efforts to prevent the gathering from taking place. Police said there were 6,000.

The protest turned chaotic when police fired tear gas and water cannons at demonstrators, resulting in nearly 1,700 arrests, scores injured and the death of former soldier Baharuddin Ahmad, 59.

The government has promised to investigate allegations of police brutality while the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) will hold a separate public inquiry into police conduct during the rally.

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