

EC Still Studying Best System To Improve Electoral Process
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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 25 (Bernama) -- The Election Commission (EC) is still studying the best system to be used to improve the running of future general elections in the country.

Its chairman Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof said the EC, for instance, was studying the legal aspects of using the biometric system and indelible ink, especially if the two methods were to be made compulsory for voters.

"If it is so, the existing law needs to be amended in parliament, and I expect the proposal to be tabled at this October-November parliamentary sitting," he said at a briefing and question-and-answer session with the media organised by Bernama's Centre of Excellence at Wisma Bernama, here, today.

The session titled "Latest Trend in Malaysia's Electoral System and Bersih 2.0 Demands", was to respond to the eight demands of the Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (Bersih), which held an illegal rally on July 9.

The demands are the use of indelible ink, cleaning up of the electoral roll, reforming postal voting, minimum campaign period of 21 days, free and fair access to the media, strengthening public institutions, and eradicating corruption and dirty politics.

Abdul Aziz said the EC did not dismiss the possibility that the two methods would be used in the 13th general election as the EC had consultants and a panel of advisers to ensure transparency of the voting process if the amendments to the election law were passed by parliament on time.

However, he said, the best system to be used would be determined at least six months before the general election after going through an efficiency test.

Abdul Aziz said the EC would also be forwarding its proposals to the parliamentary select committee on electoral reform that was to be established.

In this context, he said, if the indelible ink were to be used, it was feared that denying the right of a voter to vote could happen if his thumb had been voluntarily stained with the ink.

On the biometric system, he said although it was the best system to clean up the electoral roll, technical weaknesses like possible machine breakdowns and thumb-prints that could not be detected needed to be taken into consideration.

"The EC will look at all aspects (of using both systems), including the use of halal ink to satisfy everyone and to avoid making mistakes on polling day," he said, adding that to date, there were 12.4 million registered voters including 200,000 postal voters.

Meanwhile, the EC is considering postal voting for media practitioners covering the elections and other registered voters staying abroad.

On the minimum 21-day campaign period as demanded by Bersih, he said a fair and reasonable duration should be considered from the health aspect and it should not exceed

two weeks.

On the proposed early voting to replace postal voting, Abdul Aziz said the best method was being sought, and one that could be considered was gathering these voters at certain locations to cast their ballots two or three days before the public voting day.

He also said that the EC would not do a preliminary study on delineation of electoral constituencies as it was not a must in the eight-year period ending March 21 this year.

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