

**Postal voting: Polls reform group wants safeguards**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
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**By Anisah Shukry**

KUALA LUMPUR, March 19 — A polls reform group wants the Election Commission (EC) to set up safeguards as postal voting's "synonymous with fraud and unfair balloting".

"For too long, postal voting in Malaysia has not operated as the law intended," said Andrew Yong, international coordinator for MyOverseasVote, in a statement today.

"Instead of being sent directly to servicemen and women, armed forces postal ballot papers have been sent via the military chain of command, allowing them to be intercepted and fraudulently misused.

"Armed forces postal voters have had to mark their ballot papers in front of their military superiors, thereby putting them in fear that votes would not be secret."

Last December, MyOverseasVote proposed to the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) that each political candidate be allowed to appoint overseas election agents to monitor the postal voting process.

They further suggested that all postal ballot papers be sent by diplomatic pouch to the embassy/consulate and then forwarded to postal voters in the presence of election agents.

The voters should return the ballots to the same embassy/consulate by post, courier or in person, where the ballots will be placed in one out of 27 sealed ballot boxes signed by the election agents.

MyOverseasVote further said that the ballots must be counted in the presence of the election agents before the deadline for the return of the overseas postal ballots, which should be two days before polling day in Malaysia.

As postal ballot papers are sealed in envelopes, the postal ballot papers can be sorted by individual constituency after each box is opened.

The results for each box can then be tabulated in spreadsheet form and returned to the EC in Malaysia by fax.

Last week, The Malaysian Insider reported that there are currently an estimated 2,000 registered Malaysian voters living overseas.

On March 14, PSC chairman Datuk Seri Dr Maximus Ongkili told reporters after a closed-door meeting with the EC that it might not be possible for the EC to implement any form of overseas voting if national polls were held in the near future.

Another PSC member, Anthony Loke, told reporters that the committee has yet to decide whether to accept the EC's proposal on overseas voting.

"There have been reservations from some of the committee members, but nothing has been decided yet.

"We will meet next Tuesday to finalise," the DAP Rasah MP told reporters.

The PSC's final report is expected to be tabled in Parliament on April 2. Malaysians living abroad will only be able vote in the next general election if they use the postal voting system, the Election Commission (EC) said.

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