

Decide on overseas voting mechanism, PSC tells EC
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, March 6 — The Election Commission (EC) was today given a two-week deadline to submit its mechanism for overseas voting to the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) for electoral reform.

EC's failure to implement the panel's recommendation to allow overseas voting for all Malaysians would be tantamount to "contempt of Parliament", PSC member Anthony Loke told reporters after the committee's meeting this evening.

"The PSC must submit its final report before April 2... The PSC's recommendation (for overseas voting) stands.

"So if they do not do it, they are in contempt of Parliament," he said, reminding that the PSC's six-month lifespan expires this April 1.

The Rasah MP pointed out that the committee, in its interim report endorsed by Parliament last December, had already recommended allowing all Malaysians living abroad to vote during the polls.

But the EC, he said, had responded that same month by saying the move required amendments to regulations before it could be implemented.

At present, only full-time Malaysian students, civil servants and their spouses living abroad are allowed to vote during the elections.

"The EC has not come back to us with the mechanism... What they have said is they need more time to study it and they just 'KIV' (keep in view).

"EC must come back to us and give us their proposal... either by using the existing postal voting system or by any other system," said Loke (picture).

But the DAP Socialist Youth chief said concrete steps must be taken towards implementing the PSC's recommendation as the matter had already been tabled and passed in Parliament.

During a press conference earlier PSC chairman Datuk Seri Dr Maximus Ongkili reiterated that the committee had already agreed "in principle" to overseas voting for all Malaysians when it submitted its interim report last December.

"We are hopeful that before we finish our term, that some agreed manner... (on how to implement overseas voting) can be identified. The simplest is (through) postal voting," he said.

Maximus, however, could not offer any guarantee that overseas voting for all Malaysians would be implemented in time for the coming polls, said to be called by this year.

"But I can assure the public that the committee is working very hard to find consensus and to find as many new ideas as possible, but that is relevant to us," he said.

The PSC will reconvene next Wednesday where its five subcommittees (on legal framework, improving election processes, electoral roll, improving the EC and alternative election processes) are due to present its respective recommendations for discussion.

Loke said the subcommittees' recommendations will be deliberated before they are included in the PSC's final report, which is expected to be tabled in Parliament this April 2.

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