

PSC report lacks specifics on cleaning electoral roll, says polls group
The Malaysian Insider
April 3, 2012
By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, April 3 — Parliament's panel on electoral improvements failed to make specific recommendations on how to clean up the electoral roll, a polls reform group said today.

The National Institute for Electoral Integrity (NIEI) said in a statement today that "while key issues pertaining to the voter registration process and the electoral roll have been noted, the report lacks specific short-term recommendations to address the key concerns that the very same committee has raised in the report."

"The current concern and development in addressing the allegations of irregularities in the electoral roll requires an urgent and more comprehensive reform with clear and specific recommendations.

"There is a growing negative perception on voter registration and on the Election Commission that has created a major crisis of confidence in the electoral system," the group's acting chairman K. Shan said.

The bipartisan Parliamentary Select Committee said in its report made public today the Election Commission (EC) must prioritise efforts to ensure the electoral roll is clean and free from manipulation.

The panel also suggested the formation of a Parliamentary Select Committee to continuously monitor and oversee all efforts in cleaning up and revising the voter registry.

The recommendations come on the heels of repeated allegations by opposition lawmakers and civil society groups like Bersih 2.0 of manipulation in the current electoral roll, including the existence of duplicate voters and a suspicious surge of new voters in numerous constituencies.

The EC has also insisted it has no legal powers to remove names from the electoral roll once gazetted without the permission of voters or the event of death.

The bipartisan nine-member polls reform panel was mooted by Datuk Seri Najib Razak last year, months after his administration earned widespread criticisms for its handling of Bersih's rally for free and fair elections on July 9.

NIEI had last week said Putrajaya should set up a Database Department with branches in each local council authority to help sign up eligible voters and act as the primary registrar tasked with maintaining and managing the electoral roll.

It said this was necessary as the EC has so far not been able to maintain an up-to-date electoral roll due to rapid as well as repeated changes in address and voting location by an increasingly mobile workforce.

The Malaysian Insider also reported today Bersih is expected to hold a third rally for free and fair elections this month over the alleged failure of the polls panel to resolve key issues and pander to Bersih's earlier demands ahead of the coming polls.

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