

PSC: Postal voting to stay, expanded to include media workers
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 3 — Despite widespread calls to scrap the highly-criticised postal voting system, the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) on electoral reforms today recommended expanding the balloting method to include media personnel.

The panel's three Pakatan Rakyat (PR) lawmakers had rejected the proposal when it was finalised during last Wednesday's meeting but they were vetoed by the five Barisan Nasional (BN) MPs on the panel.

As such, the proposal, which was raised by the Election Commission (EC), was included in the panel's final report today.

"The committee recommends that media workers be allowed to vote via post according to the Elections (Postal voting) Regulations 2003," the panel said in its report tabled in the Dewan Rakyat today.

Order 3(1)(f) of the regulation, said the panel, will soon be gazetted to include the media on the permitted list of postal voters.

But these individuals must first be endorsed by their respective employers as media workers who are tasked with being on duty away from their voting district on polling day, the report added.

At present, only armed forces and police personnel, civil servants posted overseas and full-time students are allowed to vote via post.

Opposition lawmakers and civil society groups like election watchdog Bersih 2.0 have long railed against the postal voting system, claiming it was easily open to abuse and manipulations.

The PSC also said in its report today that it had considered a suggestion to allow Malaysians to vote in the constituency where they work or reside, instead of the address to which their registration as a voter is linked.

But, it said, this requires further study as it could involve amendments to the Federal Constitution.

"The committee recommends the EC review the best voting method, such as the procedure proposed for overseas voting, for voters who are absent from their registered addresses," the panel said in its report.

It also told the EC to study the "advanced voting" method, which PR lawmakers are lobbying to replace postal voting.

The nine-member PSC was mooted by Datuk Seri Najib Razak last year, months after his

administration earned widespread criticism for its handling of Bersih's rally for free and fair elections on July 9.

After 13 meetings, six public hearings and one fact-finding mission to several foreign countries, the panel finally released its 22-point report to parliamentarians yesterday. Of the 22 recommendations, however, the panel members had disagreed on four points.

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