

EC urged to amend rules for overseas voters
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By Mohd Farhan Darwis

KUALA LUMPUR, July 9 — My Overseas Vote (MOV) today said that Malaysians staying overseas will not be able to vote if the Election Commission (EC) does not amend the rules on voter registration and postal voters.

“As long as EC does not amend the regulations, it is impossible for 95 per cent of Malaysians abroad to register as voters,” My Overseas Vote co-ordinator Andrew Yong told The Malaysian Insider, saying that “there are now one million Malaysians working overseas with the majority being private sector employees.”

The EC had before this expressed its disappointment with the poor response to the registration of voters staying abroad, with only 300 to 400 people having registered so far.

Yong said that many overseas Malaysians were waiting for the EC to amend the Election Regulations (Registration of Electors) 2002, and Election Regulations (Postal Voting) 2003 to allow them to vote in general elections.

Based on the regulations, only civil servants, security personnel and Malaysian students who are taking a full-time course abroad and aged 21 and above are allowed to vote.

“Many are still waiting for the EC to amend the rules so they can vote.

“How can they register when the regulation itself doesn’t allow them to be voters?” asked Yong.

According to Yong, the EC had last August issued a statement saying that it will amend the regulations, but MOV was still waiting for that to happen.

“The Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) on electoral reforms has also recommended that the EC amends those regulations before July 3, but the three months’ period given by PSC to the EC seems to be in vain,” he stressed, clearly disappointed with the EC’s statements.

“What is the EC’s reason? Everyone is waiting for them to make the amendments. We suspect EC will not make amendments until after the 13th general election,” said Yong.

EC chairman Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof had on July 6 said that in the six months since the EC opened its registration to overseas voters in embassies and consulates, only around 300 to 400 had registered.

“Before the EC opened its registration, the whole world was in a storm as if so many Malaysians who are overseas have been denied the right to vote,” said Abdul Aziz.

For the convenience of overseas Malaysians wishing to be a voter, the EC has appointed all Malaysian officers in embassies and consulates to be the assistant registrar.

The voter registration form — can be downloaded and filled up before being sent to Malaysian embassies and consulates overseas.

In its discussion with the PSC, the EC had also proposed that Malaysians abroad who want to register as voters should go back to Malaysia at least once every five years.

“If they never come back to Malaysia, it means they already don’t know about politics in Malaysia.”

Elections for overseas voters will not be carried out following the normal process, said the EC chairman.

“In some places overseas, there are only one or two Malaysians and it is quite a waste of time to do it using the normal process.

“Therefore, the EC suggests that the voting process for Malaysians overseas be carried out through postal voting,” said Abdul Aziz.

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