

Postal vote for Malaysians abroad by GE13
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KUALA LUMPUR, July 11 — All Malaysians living abroad will be allowed to vote via post in the next general election after amendments to present laws are tabled in Parliament this September, the Election Commission (EC) confirmed today

News portal Malaysiakini reported EC chairman Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof as saying that the only condition for overseas voting was that the voter must return to Malaysia once every five years before the House is dissolved.

“This is to make sure that they know our political situation well before voting,” the portal quoted him as saying after a media briefing this morning.

Abdul Aziz added that, if required, legislative amendments will be tabled in Parliament this September to allow overseas voting via postal balloting.

“The system can be implemented by September if we have to amend the law, but it could be earlier than that (if legal amendments are not needed),” he was quoted as saying.

The Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) on electoral reforms had on April 3 given the EC a three-month deadline to formulate a mechanism to enable overseas voting for all Malaysians abroad.

“The committee recommends that the EC discusses with the authorities involved within three months from the date this report is passed by the House to enable the above requirements be enforced through the formulation of a legal framework,” the PSC had said in its final report to Parliament.

The panel had added that the proposal for overseas voting would involve several amendments to present laws, including Section 16 of the Elections Act 1958, Election Offences Act 1954, Elections (Conduct of Elections) Regulations 1981, Elections (Registration of Electors) Regulations 2002, and Elections (Postal Voting) Regulations 2003.

The committee had also recommended that the EC formulate a method to allow ballot papers to be delivered directly to voters abroad and for the papers to be sent back to the commission through Malaysian embassies.

The suggestion for overseas voting was included in the PSC’s first 10 recommendations in its interim report tabled last December.

But following the panel’s suggestion, the EC responded by saying the current voting system in Malaysia could not be replicated for voters abroad due to logistic issues.

“This view was supported by feedback from the Foreign Ministry.

“The committee (PSC) took into consideration the EC’s suggestion to look into the possibility of allowing Malaysians abroad to vote via post, but following certain requirements,” PSC’s report said.

These requirements include that the individual is a legally registered voter from Malaysia and that the individual has returned to Malaysia at least once in the five years preceding his or her application to vote as a postal voter.

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

According to EC deputy chairman Datuk Wan Ahmad Wan Omar yesterday, records from Wisma Putra show that the overall number who have registered at embassies abroad currently number at about 20,000.

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