

With 13m voters now, urgent call to clean up electoral roll
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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 15 — With 13 million registered voters to date, the Election Commission (EC) now faces increasing pressure to clean up the electoral roll and conduct separate polls for areas under both Barisan Nasional (BN) and Pakatan Rakyat (PR).

The Selangor PR government has openly declared it will not hold state elections when the federal BN calls them unless the EC is able to show the gazetted electoral roll to be used in GE13 has been cleared of dubious entries.

In its latest electoral statistics gazetted last August 16 made available to The Malaysian Insider, the EC recorded the number of registered voters as 13,052,374 people, out of whom 12,778,127 fall into the category of ordinary voters while 274,247 are recorded as absent voters. The latter group encompasses the armed forces, the police and overseas voters.

Selangor recorded the largest number of overseas voters, currently standing at 579 people, while the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur has the highest number of absent voters with 40,543 people. This is followed by Perak with 38,367 voters and Johor a distant third with 25,058 voters.

Kuala Lumpur FT also has the highest number of absent voters from within the ranks of the armed forces, totalling 24,979 people, while Selangor has the largest number of absent voters from within the police force, with 16,525 people.

The electoral law provides for absent voters to cast their ballots through the post even if the person is stationed within the voting constituency. This lack of transparency in the voting process has led to various allegations of gerrymandering and tampering with the ballot papers.

DAP Youth chief Anthony Loke has urged the EC to speed up cleaning its voter registry. In the last general election in 2008, the ruling BN coalition succeeded in grabbing only one out of 11 parliamentary seats in the Kuala Lumpur FT, namely Setiawangsa. The DAP won five, PKR scored four and PAS took the remaining one — leading to the most successful partnership among the three opposition parties in the last decade.

DAP Youth chief Anthony Loke has urged the EC to speed up cleaning its voter registry, saying the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) on electoral reform had stated that it would only take four months to do so.

“It has been four months since the report was out but we are still receiving complaints, that’s why we want the EC to speed up the cleaning process.

“We urge the EC to show commitment in this cleaning process, and will continue to press them to update the data or explain this issue,” said Loke, who is both a federal and state lawmaker in Negri Sembilan.

He said cleaning the electoral roll was still being carried out and the Malaysian Microelectronic System Institute (MIMOS) had found dubious voter names in the roll.

"In the parliamentary report, MIMOS found there were 324 addresses registered with more than 100 voters, and 938 addresses with more than 51 to 100 voters.

"The overall voters were more than 100,000," he said.

However, the deputy chairman of the EC, Datuk Wan Ahmad Wan Omar, has made it known that he disagrees with Selangor's suggestion of separate poll dates for the state election.

"This should not happen. We must think of the interest of all parties and not just political interest," he said in broadcast programme "Hello Malaysia" shown live earlier this week on Bernama TV.

The one-hour interview was titled "Isu Bubar DUN: Implikasi SPR (Dissolving state assemblies: The implication for the EC)", hosted by Sherkawi Jirim.

Wan Ahmad also argued that the cost of conducting elections would balloon substantially should there be separate elections for state and federal seats.

He pointed out that general elections cost about RM400 million while conducting a separate state election for Selangor alone would consume some RM50 million.

The 13th general election, which must be called by next April, is said to be the closest race for power between the mammoth and undefeated BN coalition and the fledgling PR bloc since 1969 when the opposition made landmark wins but which was followed by the May 13 racial bloodbath, marking the darkest chapter in the country's history since independence in 1957.

The BN was denied its customary two-thirds hold on Parliament by the DAP-PKR-PAS parties which swept an unprecedented 81 out of 222 seats in the lawmaking house besides ceding four key states — Selangor, Penang, Kedah and Perak.

The BN managed to regain Perak subsequently after three state PR lawmakers declared themselves independents and swore allegiance to the grand old coalition.

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