

## **Election Commission Identifies 18 Local NGOs, Asean Observers To Monitor 13th G.E.**

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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 27 (Bernama) -- The Election Commission (EC) has identified 18 local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as domestic observers, besides observers from Asean countries to monitor the upcoming 13th general election.

Its deputy chairman, Datuk Wira Wan Ahmad Wan Omar said the EC had met up with the NGOs from throughout the country to discuss the conditions for appointment and the monitoring framework.

He said these NGOs were selected as they were independent organisations and not siding with any political party.

"The EC has identified six NGOs from the peninsula, nine from Sarawak and three from Sabah for the task. The selection and appointment of the NGOs will be finalised next week. All the NGOs must abide by the conditions set and are also required to sign the 'Aku Janji Kerja' (I Promise to Work) pledge.

"However, it is up to the NGOs to accept the conditions set or to reject the appointment offer," he said when interviewed during the 'Hello Malaysia' programme broadcast live by BernamaTV, here, last night.

Wan Ahmad said the EC would brief the NGO representatives involved so that they would be responsible and understand the legal process of the general election in the interest of the nation's future.

"The EC will give flexibility to the local NGOs in monitoring the elections from the time Parliament is dissolved until the election results are announced and to make reports based on facts, and not based on assumptions, perception and hearsay.

"If we find any of them violating the 'Aku Janji' conditions, campaigning for any party or interviewing voters, we will terminate the observer's appointment," he said.

As for the observers from Asean countries, Wan Ahmad said the EC's decision to invite them here as international observers was a reciprocal move and respecting the neighbouring countries' invitation for Malaysia to observe and monitor their own general election.

He said observers from countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, Cambodia, Myanmar and the Philippines would be invited to monitor the Malaysian elections in a professional manner and understanding its election process and respecting its laws.

He said the EC had last year sent its officer to Myanmar as part of a team of observers from Malaysia monitoring the general election in that country.

Last Sunday, the local press quoted Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak as saying that Malaysia was prepared to bring observers from Asean countries to see that the 13th general

election would be carried out based on the constitutional provisions, the country's laws and that the validity of the voters' decision could not be disputed.

Wan Ahmad said: "The local observers will be the main choice as our own citizens have the right to observe, monitor and report, as well as to hold a press conference to inform the public what they have observed during the upcoming 13th general election.

"It is not out of the ordinary to invite observers from Asean countries, but if we invite foreign governments to monitor our election process, it is as though we are allowing them to encroach on our sovereignty."

On the EC's stand on opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim asking the Australian government to monitor Malaysia's general election, he said:

"Our stand is clear. It is not appropriate at all for us to invite a foreign government to interfere in our process of determining who should be the ruling government of our country. This is because it is not the first time that Malaysia is holding the elections and it is not a newly independent country."

Wan Ahmad said the process of choosing the ruling government for Malaysia was the absolute right of its citizens as it involved national sovereignty.

"The motive of the opposition leader (Anwar) is to draw sympathy from their (opposition) supporters and the Malaysian public, especially the fence-sitters and people outside the country, to their portraying themselves as the underdogs. This is a well-planned agenda."

He said Anwar's second motive was to gain international attention and sympathy so that there would be pressure, one after another, on Malaysia.

"If the Australian government accepts the (Anwar's) offer, surely it will officially write to the Malaysian government and the EC," he said.

He stressed that inviting foreign governments to monitor the elections was not the same as the EC inviting observers from Asean countries for the task.

On postal voting for media personnel, he said the EC would upload Borang 1 (Form 1) onto its website so that they could register as postal voters before the upcoming elections.

He said media personnel could be categorised as postal voters under Article 3(1)(f) of the General Election Regulations (Postal Voting) 2003 on the condition that they first had to register as voters.

However, he added, the media personnel had to apply to their superiors/managers to register as postal voters so that they could be gazetted as postal voters.

"The media personnel also cannot change their status to ordinary voters as it (status) will only be valid for one general election," he said.

Wan Ahmad also conveyed the EC's reminder for Malaysians to trust the EC as a body that is transparent, independent and that has a huge responsibility to the constitution and people, and not to simply hurl accusations and make slanderous claims against it.

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