

**Unpaid volunteers toil to keep GE13 clean**  
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KUALA LUMPUR, May 3 — An army of unpaid volunteers will be keeping a sharp eye out for suspicious voters as Malaysians head to the polls on Sunday.

These trained, eagle-eyed volunteers will be waiting for suspicious characters at polling stations, looking for hidden cameras and checking off names to ensure no one votes twice, The Straits Times said in a report today.

The Singapore daily said the volunteers will look for suspicious voters, such as those who dally in the voting booth, or who do not look like their IC photos.

Estimated to number about 10,000, some of these volunteers have given up their own right to vote to watch others cast their ballots.

"Our presence will keep the electoral process in check," Patricia Toa, a recruiter from Petaling Jaya, told The Straits Times.

"We are not here to pick on the (Election Commission) but to ensure that whichever candidate that wins is legitimate."

Called Pacaba, short for polling, counting and ballot booth agents, they are citizens who have attended training sessions conducted by civil liberties groups since last year.

Other countries such as Britain and Australia have them too, and while Malaysia has had them in past elections, this is the first time so many have stepped up to volunteer.

That is because in recent years, civic movements have become a third force in Malaysia, The Straits Times reported.

Electoral reform movement Bersih, which has attracted thousands to its rallies, is chief among them. Pacaba is an extension of that civic movement.

The Election Commission allows each candidate to have a certain number of volunteers to monitor voting stations.

So far, opposition candidates have attracted the bulk of volunteers.

According to the report, Amy Lee, a co-ordinator at Tindak Malaysia, an election watchdog which has trained volunteers, said there are still not enough.

Each constituency needs an average of about 500 to 600 polling agents, she said, depending on the number of polling stations.

There are 222 parliamentary constituencies in the country.

Bersih and opposition parties have called this election the dirtiest ever, with the ruling Barisan Nasional and the opposition Pakatan Rakyat in their closest fight.

There are questions over the sudden influx of voters in several constituencies, as well as complaints of tampered votes and outdated electoral rolls.

The daily said Lydia Lee, a Pacaba volunteer, is flying to Sarawak at her own expense; she will be a polling agent in Siburan, two hours' drive from Kuching. She votes in Penang.

"My vote is just one," she was quoted as saying. "But by becoming a polling agent, I believe I can help prevent fraud from happening to many others."

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