

Bersih People's Tribunal to sit for five days in September
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BY V. ANBALAGAN

The Bersih People's Tribunal on GE13, a tribunal mooted in response to the public outcry and concerns of electoral fraud and irregularities in Malaysia's 13th General Election, is set to hear complaints for five days in September.

Six renowned individuals, three from overseas and three from Malaysia, will form the tribunal to preside over the enquiry proceedings in Kuala Lumpur from September 18-22.

It will be chaired by Yash Pal Ghai, an expert in constitutional law and Head of the Constitution Advisory Support Unit of the UN Development Programme in Nepal, former Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Cambodia on human rights and former Chairperson of the Kenya Constitution Review Commission and Kenya National Constitutional Conference.

Other international panel members include Ramlan Surbakti (former deputy chairman of the Indonesian Election Commission) and Kraisak Choonhavan (president of the Asean Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus, a former Senator and deputy leader of the Democrat Party of Thailand).

The Malaysians on the tribunal are lawyer Datuk Azzat Kamaludin (former administrative and diplomatic officer with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia), Dr Mavis Puthuchery (former associate professor from the Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Malaya) and Rev Dr. Hermen Shastri (general secretary of the Council of Churches of Malaysia).

People's Tribunal Secretariat member Irene Fernandez told a news conference today the tribunal is one of the most significant milestones in the people's` struggle for a free and fair election.

She urged the public to come forward to provide evidence on electoral fraud and irregularities before August 16.

"We are also in the process of collecting evidence all over the country," she said, adding that the legal team will be led by Professor Gurdial Singh Professor of Law at the Law Faculty of the University of Malaya and Director of the Centre of Excellence for Biodiversity Law. Gurdial was also the Chief Prosecutor of the international Kuala Lumpur War Crimes Tribunal.

Renowned civil rights activist and Bersih 2 co-chair Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan had said that the tribunal may not have any legal standing but will serve as a "moral force" to publicly expose electoral fraud.

Meanwhile Ambiga, who was present at the press conference today, voiced her concern over judges ordering parties who lost their election petition pay exorbitant costs.

"This is discouraging people to come to court and have access to justice," she said.

Ambiga said election petitions were public interest cases and felt parties should be left to

bear their own costs.

She said the court had the discretion to award costs but a high amount is tantamount to a punishment.

On Wednesday, Judge Zabariah Mohd Yusof ordered PAS candidate Ahmad Zamri Asa'ad Khuzaimi who challenged the outcome for the Titiwangsa parliamentary seat was ordered to pay RM40,000 to the Election Commission and RM30,000 to Johari Abdul Ghani, the Barisan Nasional candidate who won. - July 25, 2013.

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