



Global Bersih Press Release

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EC: ENSURE A WORKABLE OVERSEAS VOTING SYSTEM AND SUFFICIENT CAMPAIGN PERIOD FOR SABAH SNAP ELECTION

Global Bersih strongly urges the Election Commission (EC) to put in place a workable, secure and transparent system to allow overseas voters, including those living in Singapore, Brunei, Indonesia and Southern Thailand, to vote during the upcoming elections in the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic, starting with the snap election for the Sabah State Legislative Assembly.

In particular, Global Bersih would like to stress the importance of a campaign period that is long enough to allow overseas voters to receive and return their ballots, and recommends a period of least 21-24 days. This is to avoid the problems faced during the 14th General Election from repeating themselves. These led to the disenfranchisement of the overseas voters as the overtly short campaign period did not give voters enough time to receive the ballot papers and return them to the respective polling station, as well as not taking into account the public holidays resulting in even shorter postage time allowance.

Global Bersih would also like to urge the EC to review the overseas voting system as a whole in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that systems in place are still workable in practice. Limitations arising from the Covid-19 pandemic that have an impact on overseas voters include severely impeded international and domestic postal services, restricted trans-border mobility and health risks. Other important factors to be taken into account are the financial and time burden for voters, the availability of accurate information, and ballot security and traceability (from leaving the Election Commission to the ballot box), timeliness and effective ballot distribution to respective ballot stations as outlined in Global Bersih's Overseas Voters Reform Proposal.

The Election Commission has an important responsibility to ensure that all Malaysians, both abroad and in the country, are able to exercise their constitutional right to vote. Therefore, the campaigning period and voting process determined and carried out by the EC must inspire voter confidence and facilitate the voting process. We therefore strongly urge the EC to put into place a workable, secure and transparent system for all overseas voters including a campaign period of at least 21-24 days.

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