



MEDIA RELEASE

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GLOBAL BERSIH: VOTING PROCESS CHANGES FOR MALACCA ELECTIONS ARE WELCOMED BUT SHOULD BE MADE PERMANENT

Global Bersih commends the Election Commission's decision to allow all overseas Malaysians, including those in neighbouring countries, to vote by post in the upcoming Malacca state elections.

Rules preventing overseas Malaysians in Southern Thailand, Singapore, Brunei and Kalimantan from voting by post have been rescinded by gazette for the Malacca elections, together with a requirement for Malaysians to have been in Malaysia at least 30 days in the five years previous to dissolution of the Legislative Assembly. A large number of overseas Malaysian live in these countries and have until now been effectively deprived of their vote if they were unable to travel back to Malaysia to vote because personal, professional or financial constraints.

These changes, together with the implementation of a process to allow online registration of postal voters, are welcomed by Global Bersih, which has been advocating for them over past years.

Nirmala Windgatter, Global Bersih's Secretary General said: "All these changes will make it much easier in practice for the Malaysian diaspora, and especially Malaysians in neighbouring countries, to make their voices heard through the ballot box. However, these changes are currently applicable only to the upcoming state elections in Malacca. It is essential that the changes should be applied to all elections on a permanent basis."

Overseas Malaysian voters have long suffered from unpredictability and lack of transparency in the voting process, with rules changing regularly from election to election, resulting in significant obstacles to members of the diaspora who wish to exercise their right to vote. Global Bersih urges the Election Commission to ensure that these changes are enshrined in legislation so that they are automatically and predictably applied to any elections going forward, without the need for specific gazettes for each election. The changes should also be communicated in a timely and effective manner to Malaysians living overseas with the help of Malaysian embassies and high commissions.

While commending the decision to allow postal voting for all overseas voters in the Malaccan state election, Global Bersih highlights the need for an efficient and timely postal voting process, in light of the short campaign period of 12 days, recalling the significant problems experienced by postal voters in receiving and sending back their votes in time during GE 14.

For further information, please contact:

Nirmala Devi Windgaetter
Secretary General
Nirmala.wind@globalbersih.org

Global Bersih
15 Couer des Bastion
CH-1205
Geneva, Switzerland
www.globalbersih.org
facebook.com/GlobalBersih
twitter.com/GlobalBersih