

MEDIA STATEMENT

22th September 2022

Global Bersih calls on Election Commission to make urgent changes to overseas postal voting system immediately

Global Bersih has confirmed with Election Commission that overseas Malaysians will be using the existing overseas postal voting system to vote for GE-15. Therefore we are calling for the Election Commission to make urgent changes to the overseas voting system to ensure that the growing number of overseas Malaysian voters are able to exercise their right to vote in the 15th General Elections (GE-15). Given the speculation that GE-15 might be held in November 2022, there is a dire need for these changes to be implemented as soon as possible.

The changes requested include:

- **Election Commission to open the the overseas postal voters registration immediately to provide an ongoing registration process for overseas voters.** This is essential to avoid processing backlogs and delays. Currently, Malaysians abroad have to register as overseas voters during a narrow timeframe before each election, putting pressure on both the Electoral Commission staff to process the applications and on voters to apply within a limited time.
- **Allowing non-Malaysians to act as witnesses on the postal ballot documents.** The current requirement that postal ballot documents must be signed and witnessed by a Malaysian citizen has proven to be a stumbling block for many overseas Malaysians who live in areas with few or no other Malaysians. Allowing non-Malaysians to be witnesses will enable more overseas Malaysians to participate in the voting process.
- **Extending the campaign period to a minimum of 21-25 days, allowing enough time for postal ballots to be sent to overseas voters and returned to polling stations.** Campaign periods for previous elections have been far too short to allow overseas voters to receive and return ballots, and have necessitated the use of expensive courier services. The implementation of Undi18 and Automatic Voters Registration (AVR) will result in a growth from 14.9 million eligible voters in GE-14 to 21.1 million eligible voters in the current electoral roll. The Election Commission will need to have ample time to prepare for the elections and to ensure that the overseas postal voting system is effectively implemented.

According to Nirmala Devi Windgatter, Global Bersih's Secretary-General, these changes can be made before GE-15, as they are straightforward procedural changes within the discretion of the Election Commission. These changes do not require significant amendments to any existing laws or policies. To ensure that the overseas postal voting process works effectively during GE-15, these changes should be implemented as soon as possible by the Election Commission and relevant Ministries.

Global Bersih also stressed the importance of relevant government departments proactively communicating information on the overseas voting process to Malaysians abroad, and calls upon Wisma Putra to mobilize its network of overseas missions and embassies to support this process. For example, voters, should be immediately informed that they should open a user account on the Election Commission website to be able to register as overseas voters.

These changes are immediately needed to avoid repeating the mistakes made during GE-14, such as the lack of clear and transparent information for overseas voters, and the late arrival of postal ballots that prevented overseas voters from casting their vote.

Global Bersih is an international movement of overseas Malaysians, created to support Malaysian civil society's work and strengthen Malaysia's maturing democracy, using peaceful and legal means of action.

Global Bersih Steering Committee

For further information, please contact

Nirmala Devi Windgatter

Secretary General

nirmala.wind@globalbersih.org

0049 1722389665

Global Bersih

15 Cour des Bastion

CH-1205

Geneva, Switzerland

www.globalbersih.org

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1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malaysian_diaspora

2. <https://bersih.org/2022/04/04/major-reform-needed-to-postal-voting-process-to-enfranchise-over-1-million-malaysians-living-overseas/>

3. Elections(Conduct of Elections) Regulations 1981, s3

