

MEDIA STATEMENT

2nd June 2023

Overseas postal voting for state elections: open online registration and make urgent improvements now, says Global Bersih

Global Bersih calls on the Election Commission (EC) to immediately open online registration for overseas postal voting in the upcoming state elections for Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu and Penang, echoing a recent media statement from Bersih¹.

Currently, Malaysians abroad only have a short time frame to register as overseas postal voters before each election. In GE15, overseas Malaysians only had 14 days to register as postal voters. This short time frame also puts pressure on Electoral Commission staff to process the applications. According to Bersih, the EC can only handle up to 10 000 postal vote applications without running into severe backlogs and delays using the current process.² With the continuing increase in the number of Malaysians voting from outside Malaysia, EC should extend the period to register as overseas postal voters to between six months-one year before the projected dates for future elections.

Overseas voters had to go to huge efforts and expense to return their ballots in time in previous state and general elections. This is glaring proof that the EC is not effectively fulfilling its responsibility to ensure that Malaysians overseas can exercise their right to vote, and is instead putting this burden on overseas voters themselves. Given that the state elections might take place very soon, Global Bersih urges the Election Commission to ensure a more effective, inclusive and transparent overseas voting system by implementing the following procedural changes as soon as possible:

- **Allow non-Malaysians to act as witnesses on 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.
- **Extend the campaign period to a minimum of 21-25 days to allow 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

¹<https://bersih.org/2023/06/01/ec-must-open-application-for-postal-voting-for-the-6-state-elections-immediately/>

² <https://bersih.org/download/evaluation-of-postal-voting-for-johor-2022-for-overseas-voters/>

services. The eleven days minimum campaign period required under Regulation 3(1) Elections (Conduct of Elections) Regulations 1981³ is totally insufficient to accommodate the reality of the overseas postal voting timeline.

- **Standardise and communicate the process of overseas ballot dispatch from the Pusat Pengeluaran Undi to overseas Malaysians.** There is a need for a transparent and standardised SOP on how ballots are dispatched to overseas Malaysians, which explicitly identifies the fastest and safest method for dispatch overseas ballots, and ensures that there will be a tracking number for each ballot.
- **Increase the effectiveness of overseas voter education and mobilisation** using all possible channels, and in particular, explicitly solicit the assistance of Malaysian Foreign Missions and agencies responsible for students to distribute accurate and updated information.

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the population of the Malaysian diaspora already stood at 1,860,037 as of 2020⁴. Thanks to the implementation of Undi18 and Automatic Voters Registration (AVR), the number of overseas Malaysians entitled to vote has significantly grown and is set to increase even further. The implementation of other Global Bersih recommendations has also drastically increased the numbers of overseas voters. These include online registration for overseas postal voters, the inclusion of voters in neighboring countries into the overseas postal voting system and the removal of unnecessary requirements to register as overseas voters. . From 7979⁵ registered overseas postal voters for GE14, and, the numbers jumped to 48 109⁶ registered overseas voters for GE15, indicating a drastic increase of 603%.

Global Bersih has made full recommendations for the Election Commission, which can be found [here](#).

Global Bersih is an international non-partisan movement of overseas Malaysians focusing on electoral reform to advocate for the rights of the Malaysian diaspora.

For further information, please contact

Nirmala Devi Windgaetter

Secretary General

nirmala.wind@globalbersih.org

+49 1722389665

Global Bersih

15 Cours des Bastions

CH-1205

Geneva, Switzerland

www.globalbersih.org

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

⁴ https://www.un.org/en/file/105459/download?token=oh_ySkJg

⁵ <https://www.themalaysianinsight.com/index.php/s/364145>

⁶ <https://themalaysianreserve.com/2022/11/15/ge15-ec-issues-365686-postal-ballot-papers/>

facebook.com/GlobalBersih

twitter.com/GlobalBersih

tiktok.com/@globalbersih

instagram.com/global_bersih

linkedin.com/company/globalbersih