

Press Statement from BERSIH 2.0 (26 March 2021): EC Betrays Peoples' Mandate

The Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (BERSIH 2.0) strongly condemns the Election Commission's (EC) decision to postpone the implementation of Undi18 to September 2022. EC Chairperson Datuk Abdul Ghani Salleh should immediately resign to make way for a successor who has the integrity and competence to implement the lowering of voting age to 18 (UNDI18) and Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) by July 2021 as planned.

The EC's decision is a robbery of the rights of about four million Malaysians aged 18-20 to shape the direction of the country at the polls, when the next federal, state or by-election is called. Riding on the COVID-19 pandemic is absurd because it has nothing to do with the implementation of Undi18 as the necessary information already exist in the database of the National Registration Department (JPN).

Abdul Ghani Sallah's lame excuse on Covid-19 is a blatant lie to confuse the public by mixing UNDI18 and AVR. There is no technicality whatsoever involved in registering voters aged 18-21. It could have been implemented in 2019 after the Constitutional Amendment was gazetted. UNDI18 was delayed only because PAS had demanded for UNDI18 and AVR to be commenced concurrently.

Up until November 3, 2020, eight months after the commencement of the first Movement Control Order (MCO), de facto Law Minister Dato' Takiyuddin Hassan in his parliamentary reply to Lim Lip Eng MP of Kepong still promised that with the works carried out by a joint EC-JPN taskforce, AVR was expected to be implemented latest by July 2021, within the EC's initial estimated timeline, ie 18-24 months from 25 July 2019, when the Constitutional Amendment was passed by the Senate.

The EC must answer to all Malaysians what have changed between November 3, 2020 and yesterday and whether the EC-JPN taskforce and its contractors have encountered unexpected failures in their works. The EC needs to be upfront and transparent, or it will be considered as a yes-man to the ruling party, whose senior leaders have expressed reluctance to see Undi18 being implemented.

Malaysians, especially the young voters, are very disappointed with the EC's decision to postpone the implementation of Undi18. BERSIH 2.0 and other civil society organisations will not hesitate to take bolder action if the EC does not speed up the implementation of Undi18 which has been delayed for almost three years.

BERSIH 2.0 also demands that the Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin immediately allow Parliament to convene that Elections (Registration of Electors) Regulations and other relevant legislations may be updated to enable implementation of UNDI18 and AVR. Muhyiddin Yassin and the EC chairman must bear the sole responsibility for any delay in the implementation of Undi18.

Released by,

The Steering Committee of BERSIH 2.0