

# Was GE13 Free and Fair?

An Interim Observation Report on  
Malaysia's 13th General Election

Jointly prepared by:



# CONTENTS

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Acknowledgement	3
<b>SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION TO OUR ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION</b>	
1.1 The scope of this report	4
1.2 Our deployment and methodology	5
<b>SECTION 2: FORMATION OF GE13 OBSERVATION MISSION FOR PENINSULA MALAYSIA</b>	
2.1 How the mission was formed	6
2.2 Issues arising from the process of appointment	7
<b>SECTION 3: THE CONTEXT LEADING UP TO GE13</b>	
3.1 Overview of Malaysia	9
3.2 Government	9
3.3 The election laws in Malaysia	10
3.4 The election management body	10
3.5 The electoral roll	10
3.6 Post-elections complaints mechanism	10
3.7 The advanced and postal voting	11
3.8 The Parliamentary Select Committee on Electoral Reforms	11
3.9 The concept of caretaker government	11
3.10 The election observers	11
3.11 The main political actors in GE13	12
3.12 The political climate	13
<b>SECTION 4: WIDER PERSPECTIVES ON GE13</b>	
4.1 The media was heavily biased towards BN	15
4.2 Government and armed forces facilities were repeatedly used during the official campaigning period	16
4.3 The EC's impartiality and competency were repeatedly questioned	17
4.4 The integrity of the electoral roll continues to be questioned	18
4.5 The Registrar of Societies is viewed as not free from partisan interference	19
4.6 The delineation of constituencies is too unequal	19
4.7 The financing of political parties is not transparent	20
4.8 Ethnic minority participation in GE13 was good but manipulation of racial issues for political gains abound	20

## SECTION 5: KEY OBSERVATIONS FROM THE PERIOD BETWEEN NOMINATION DAY AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULTS

5.1	Introduction	23
5.3	Official Campaign Period (April 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2013 to May 4 <sup>th</sup> , 2013)	24
5.4	Overseas Voting (April 28 <sup>th</sup> , 2013)	25
5.5	Advanced Voting (April 30 <sup>th</sup> , 2013)	25
5.6	Polling Day (5 May 2013)	26
5.7	Challenges faced by the disabled and elderly on Election Day	27
5.8	The ineffectiveness of the indelible ink	27
5.9	Phantom voters	28
5.10	Summary	28

## SECTION 6: CONCLUDING REMARKS – WAS GE13 FREE AND FAIR?

6.1	The EC has undertaken various initiatives, but fails to obtain confidence from a significant proportion of the public	29
6.2	The conduct of GE13 must not be examined in isolation	29
6.3	Was GE13 free and fair?	30

## SECTION 7: RECOMMENDATIONS

A.	Appointment of election observers	31
B.	Improving the EC	31
C.	Improving the electoral roll	32
D.	Improving political party registration process	32
E.	Constituency sizes should be normalised	32
F.	Political financing	32

Appendix A: Borang B-01-FINAL

Appendix A: Borang B-02-FINAL

Appendix A: Borang B-03-FINAL

Appendix A: Borang B-04-FINAL

Appendix A: Borang B-05-FINAL

Appendix A: Borang B-06-FINAL

Appendix A: Borang B-07-FINAL

Appendix A: Borang B-08-FINAL

Appendix A: Borang B-09-FINAL

Appendix B: Constituencies covered by Observers

Appendix C: AKU JANJI PEMERHATI

Appendix D: TI-M Declines EC Invitation to be Election Observer

Appendix E: IDEAS Press Statement 7 Jan 2013

Appendix F: Number of Voters in each constituencies

Appendix G: A sample selection of issues and incidences recorded  
by our field observers

Appendix H: Members of the Election Observation Mission

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IDEAS and CPPS acknowledge the Election Commission officials, members of political parties, civic activists, the police, the armed forces, and citizens who graciously welcomed our observation efforts.

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION TO OUR ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION

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### 1.1 THE SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

This election observation mission was conducted to assess the freedom and fairness of Malaysia’s GE13 against international standards. It is important to note that the phrase “free and fair” needs to be defined clearly to allow this report to be read in the most appropriate context. After reviewing various benchmarks, we decided on using the widely-accepted “Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections” that is adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)<sup>1</sup>, of which Malaysia is a member. This benchmark provides a clear and concise definition of the phrase.

Our mandate was to *observe, record, analyse and report* the overall conduct of GE13, including the key events leading up to it.

The scope of our observation mission does not authorise us to intervene or propose recommendations before GE13. Our mandate was to produce a report *after GE13* to evaluate if the conduct of GE13 was free and fair.

Our findings cover two areas – the wider perspectives on events prior to nomination day (Section 4), and the findings from our short-term observation on the field between nomination day and the announcement of results (Section 5). Although our appointment was only official for the period between dissolution of parliament and polling day, we include our analysis of the broader perspectives leading up to GE13 for readers to obtain a deeper appreciation of this report’s context.

We were appointed by the EC to observe the electoral conduct in Peninsula Malaysia. Therefore, Section 5 of this report presents our findings for Peninsula Malaysia only.

The terms and conditions of our appointment set by the EC states that a final version of this report must include the EC’s official responses to our findings. This report was submitted to the EC at 9:30am on Wednesday, 8<sup>th</sup> May 2013. We anticipate incorporating the EC’s response in a separate section once received.

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1 <http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/154-free.htm>

## 1.2 OUR DEPLOYMENT AND METHODOLOGY

Upon receiving formal accreditation on 31 January 2013, we commenced recruiting and training of short-term observers. Our team travelled to all 11 states and the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya in Peninsula Malaysia to recruit members of the public, and subsequently to run training sessions on the election observation process. Altogether, we conducted 22 training events over seven weeks to recruit and train our short-term observers.

Our research team examined the political and legal contexts of GE13. They examined the relevant laws and regulations, including recent developments following the recommendations made by the Parliamentary Select Committee on Electoral Reform.

Our research team also developed a set of nine forms to be used by short-term observers, covering nomination day, the campaign period, advanced voting, polling day, and the counting, tallying and announcement of results. The forms were designed through consultations with MAFREL and Merdeka Center. The full set of forms is available in Appendix A.

Our team set up telephone and email hotlines to receive public reports of electoral misconduct. A webpage was also designed to:

- Publicise our recruitment efforts
- Receive reports from members of the public, including pictures and videos of alleged misconduct
- Receive observation reports from our short-term observers

In total our team deployed 311 short-term observers to 99 out of 165 parliamentary constituencies in Peninsula Malaysia (60% of the total number of constituencies). For a complete list of constituencies covered in our observation, please refer to Appendix B.

In addition to our observers in Malaysia, we also had two observers in France, two in Switzerland, one in the USA, two in Hong Kong, two in the UK and five in the UAE to observe overseas voting on 28 April 2013.

## SECTION 2: FORMATION OF GE13 OBSERVATION MISSION FOR PENINSULA MALAYSIA

### 2.1 HOW THE MISSION WAS FORMED

On 28 May 2012, the EC invited five organisations – IDEAS, Merdeka Center, TI-M, PROHAM and NIEI – for a meeting to discuss potential accreditation as domestic election observers for GE13.

The EC suggested the five organisations work collaboratively to observe the conduct of the electoral process in Peninsula Malaysia<sup>1</sup>, and ultimately submit a common report on their observation. The organisations agreed, and formed a joint steering committee to commence the planning and establishment of an election observation mission.

While the opportunity to observe the most closely contested election in the country's history was exciting, it also created operational challenges. Since none of the organisations were election observation experts, they did not have the funding, machinery, manpower and expertise to lead a successful and rigorous project.

Benchmarking election observation missions internationally, our initial plan to observe 165 constituencies in Peninsula Malaysia would have required:

- Recruiting, training and deploying 990 observers, assuming 6 observers per constituency;

- Establishing a full-time central secretariat to coordinate all field activities, including the submission and analysis of the observation reports;
- Conducting long-term observation and developing the final observation report;
- Raising more than RM2 million (USD675,000) to fund the entire mission

NIEI and PROHAM decided to decline the invitation from the EC and withdraw from the election observation mission, citing lack of resources. CPPS was then invited by the EC to join the project.

The remaining organisations – IDEAS, CPPS, Merdeka Centre, and TI-M – negotiated the terms and conditions of the election observation mission prior to accepting official accreditation. During these negotiations, we found the EC to be open to most suggestions by the organisations. Similarly, the organisations were receptive to the EC's explanations. We found the spirit of the negotiations to be cordial, with all sides committed to ensuring the success of the observation mission.

Our final meeting with the EC was on 13 December 2012. At this meeting, the EC had also invited the Malaysian Youth Council (MBM) to be a member of the observation mission. At this meeting, all the organisations and the EC jointly agreed to the terms and conditions of the election observation mission, as per Appendix C. The EC also informed the organisations that they were no longer expected to work collaboratively or to submit a common report.

On 4 January 2013, TI-M decided decline the EC's invitation, citing disagreement with the terms and conditions of the election observation mission (Appendix D and E).

Unlike MBM, the remaining organisations did not have a large pool of volunteers to conduct observation field work. Thus, the organisations decided to continue working together in partnership to raise funds, and to develop the processes, mechanisms and analytical tools for the project.

<sup>1</sup> Sabah, Sarawak and Labuan are not within the remit

In mid-January 2013, the EC invited the Malaysian Confederation for the Disabled (MCD) to observe the challenges of disabled voters in the Petaling Jaya Utara and Lembah Pantai constituencies. MCD joined our election observation partnership in February 2013.

On 31 January 2013, the EC officially appointed IDEAS, CPPS and the remaining organisations as accredited domestic election observers for GE13.

Between February and May 2013, the partnership in the election observation mission evolved as follows:

- Merdeka Centre conducted their own recruitment and deployment of observers;
- IDEAS and CPPS agreed to a request by MCD to extend their observation to include the challenges faced by the disabled;
- IDEAS and CPPS formed a closer partnership, culminating in the production of this common report

*It is important to note that the opinions and recommendations contained in this report are entirely the responsibility of IDEAS and CPPS only, and do not represent the views of the other organisations appointed as election observers in Peninsula Malaysia.*

## 2.2 ISSUES ARISING FROM THE PROCESS OF APPOINTMENT

### 2.2.1 Lack of transparency in the appointment process

While the EC had stated that the organisations were appointed as election observers “because they were considered non-partisan and were professional bodies”<sup>1</sup>, the process and criteria of selection were not transparent. None of the organisations appointed had previous experience of observing elections.

The criteria for selection was also not consistent. Even though the term “NGO observers” was widely used, only IDEAS, CPPS, MCD and MBM were not-for-profit organisations, while Merdeka Center was a for-profit company.

The lack of transparent and consistent criteria in the appointment of observers created justified and valid public doubts on their ability to conduct an effective observation mission.

### 2.2.2 Lack of funding created a hurdle

The EC had informed all appointed organisations from the onset that no financial assistance would be provided. This created a significant challenge given the extremely stringent timelines to prepare for the observation mission<sup>2</sup>.

To obtain financial assistance, we wrote to the Prime Minister’s Office, all state governments in Peninsula Malaysia, corporate foundations and companies. None of these organisations responded to our request.

IDEAS eventually secured funding from several high commissions and foundations based in other countries. In April 2013, the EC confirmed that they too would provide some funds for the training of volunteers. However, the amount of money raised by IDEAS (circa RM247,000) and by CPPS (RM50,000 from the EC only) was still insufficient to allow us to conduct all the observation activities that we had planned to do. This forced us to revise our scope of observation substantially.

A high proportion of funding received by IDEAS for this project was sourced from abroad. IDEAS viewed this as risky, given the vocal opposition towards foreign funding by some quarters in Malaysia. In particular, it was highly contentious for IDEAS to receive funds from the Open Society Foundations<sup>3</sup>, given the controversial image its founder, George Soros, has in the eyes of certain quarters in Malaysia.

1 New Straits Times, 25 June 2012, “Five groups selected as polls observers”

2 The formal accreditation was only issued on 31 January 2013. The organisations were then expected to conduct a volunteer recruitment exercise within 30 days, and to pay for the process themselves.

3 CPPS did not receive funds from the Open Society Foundations



While receiving foreign funds would result in significant reputational risks, refusing them would have rendered IDEAS unable to conduct this mission. IDEAS believes that fulfilling the public and the EC's expectations were ultimately more important than employing an overly cautious approach towards protecting our reputation. As always, all funding was accepted on the strict understanding that funders must not influence or interfere in the operations of the project or in the production of this report.

### *2.2.3 There was not enough time for proper preparations*

IDEAS' negotiations with the EC began on 28 May 2012 and CPPS joined soon afterwards. However, our official appointment as an independent election observer was eight months later on 31 January 2013 despite repeated requests to the EC to expedite the appointment process.

The long delay in our formal appointment led to several challenges:

- We could not meet our target of recruiting 400 short-term observers within the EC's five-week deadline
- We were not able to conduct in-depth training for our volunteers
- We did not have sufficient time to raise the necessary funds given that almost all potential funders needed to see an official accreditation document

## SECTION 3: THE CONTEXT LEADING UP TO GE13

### 3.1 OVERVIEW OF MALAYSIA

The Federation of Malaya – what today comprises Peninsula Malaysia – gained independence from the British in 1957. In 1963, the Federation of Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak collectively formed what is known today as Malaysia. In 1965, Singapore became an independent, sovereign country.

Malaysia comprises the 13 states of Sabah, Sarawak, Johor, Pahang, Trengganu, Kelantan, Perlis, Kedah, Penang, Perak, Selangor, Malacca, Negri Sembilan, and the three Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and Labuan.

According to Census 2010<sup>1</sup>:

- Malaysia has a population of 28.3 million
- From the citizenry, 67.4% is Bumiputera<sup>2</sup>, 24.6% Chinese, 7.3% Indians, and 0.7% others
- The Malays form the predominant (63.1%) ethnic group in Peninsula Malaysia. The Ibans constitute 30.3% of the population in Sarawak, while the Kadazan/Dusun is 24.5% in Sabah (note that these communities are Bumiputera, see footnote 2 below)
- Islam is the most widely professed religion with 61.3% being Muslims. Buddhists form 19.8% of the population, Christians 9.2% and Hindus 6.3%
- Malaysia has a young population, with almost 50% aged below 25, and 70% below 40 years old

1 2010 Population and Housing Census of Malaysia, Malaysian Department of Statistics

2 Bumiputera literally means the “son of the soil”. The ethnic Malays are the main Bumiputera in Peninsular Malaysia. In Sabah, the main Bumiputera are ethnic Kadazan, Bajau and Murut, while in Sarawak they are Iban, Malay, Bidayuh and Melanau.

According to the EC<sup>3</sup>, Malaysia has 13,268,002 registered voters, made up of:

- 12,992,661 normal voters,
- 272,387 advanced voters (the armed forces and the police)
- 2954 overseas postal voters

Data from Merdeka Center suggests that the percentage of first-time voters is relatively high, at about 25% of the electoral roll. Almost 50% of registered voters are aged below 40.

Malaysia uses the first-past-the-post voting system.

### 3.2 GOVERNMENT<sup>4</sup>

Malaysia is a parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarchy. The federal Head of State is the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (i.e. the King), and the head of government is the Prime Minister.

The highest legislative body is the Parliament, consisting of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, the Dewan Negara (upper house) and the Dewan Rakyat (lower house). Members of the Dewan Negara are appointed, while members of the Dewan Rakyat are elected.

Each of the 13 states has its own unicameral State Legislative Assemblies (Dewan Undangan Negeri, DUN). The size of the state assemblies vary from one state to another, but in combination there are 576 DUN seats across the 13 states. Every seat is elected by simple majority in single member constituencies.

In GE13, Malaysians voted to choose the 222 members of the Dewan Rakyat, and 505 members of the DUN. The state of Sarawak is not holding their DUN election this year.

3 Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya Malaysia, Daftar Pemilih Terkini sehingga ST 4/2012

4 This part is mainly taken from the website of the Malaysian parliament and the Federal Constitution.

### 3.3 THE ELECTION LAWS IN MALAYSIA

GE13 is governed by the following laws:

- a) the Federal Constitution
- b) the States' Constitutions
- c) the Election Commission Act 1957
- d) the Elections Act 1958
- e) the Election Offences Act 1954
- f) the Election Regulations (Conduct of Elections) 1981
- g) the Election Regulations (Registration of Electors) 2002
- h) the Election Regulations (Postal Voting) 2003

### 3.4 THE ELECTION MANAGEMENT BODY

The election management body in Malaysia is the Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya Malaysia (the Election Commission of Malaysia, EC).

The EC is mandated under Article 113 of the Federal Constitution to govern the electoral process in Malaysia. This includes preparing and revising electoral rolls, reviewing and delineating electoral constituencies, as well as monitoring the conduct of elections in accordance with the Election Act 1958 and the Election Offences Act 1954. The EC also has rule-making powers to regulate the registration of voters and the conduct of elections.

The EC's membership consists of a chairman, a deputy chairman and five members. All appointments are made by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong after consultation with the Conference of Rulers. In accordance with Article 114(2) of the Federal Constitution, such appointments "shall have regard to the importance of securing an Election Commission which enjoys public confidence".

Under Article 115(1) of the Federal Constitution, the EC is empowered to appoint its own staff to carry out its duties. This principle ensures the independence of the EC and prevents it from being perceived as a government department.

### 3.5 THE ELECTORAL ROLL

The right to universal suffrage is protected under Article 119 of the Federal Constitution, where a citizen may register as a voter upon turning 21 years of age.

The registration of voters in Malaysia is not automated; it requires submission of an official paper to a post office or to the offices of the Election Commission. The EC will then register a voter after verifying their details with the National Registration Department (NRD) database.

The power to gazette the electoral roll belongs to the Election Commission. Since 2001, and following amendments to the Elections Act 1958, once the electoral roll has been gazetted, it can no longer be questioned or be judicially reviewed in court.

For GE13, the EC announced that only voters who registered before 31 December 2012 would be entitled to vote.

### 3.6 POST-ELECTIONS COMPLAINTS MECHANISM

The results of the Malaysian election can only be challenged in court through an election petition, which must be submitted within 21 days of the election results being gazetted. An election petition can be made on several grounds, including:

- a) Bribery, extortion or any form of misconduct which could affect the elections
- b) Non-compliance with the provisions of law and rules of elections
- c) Corrupt or illegal acts found committed by candidates or their agents
- d) The candidate or his agent being found to be unfit to participate in the elections

### 3.7 THE ADVANCED AND POSTAL VOTING

For the first time in Malaysia's history, GE13 saw the implementation of advanced voting. Advanced voting is allowed for members of the security forces and their spouses who have been assigned duties on the normal polling day. Should they be unable to vote at advanced polling centres due to their duties, these individuals can apply to vote by post.

Others who are eligible to vote by post are:

- Journalists and the EC officers who are on duty on normal polling day
- Malaysians residing abroad (other than in Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand)

According to the EC, in GE13 there were:

- 272,387 military and police personnel (including their spouses) registered as advanced voters, and;
- 2,954 Malaysians registered as overseas voters.

### 3.8 THE PARLIAMENTARY SELECT COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORMS

In response to increasing pressure to improve Malaysia's electoral processes, a Parliamentary Select Committee on Electoral Reform was established in April 2012, made up of five MPs from BN, three from PR, and one independent. The committee made 22 recommendations.

Of these 22, only some recommendations have been fully or partially implemented such as allowing postal voting for media personnel, allowing Malaysians residing overseas to vote from abroad, lengthening the campaign period, and the cleaning up of the electoral roll.

### 3.9 THE CONCEPT OF CARETAKER GOVERNMENT

The concept of a caretaker government is not provided for under the Federal Constitution or any other election laws in Malaysia. Therefore the incumbent government continues to perform the duties of government after dissolution of parliament and throughout the campaigning period. The PSC on Electoral Reform recommended that the EC prepares a guideline and code of conduct for a caretaker government, but the EC stated that this is outside of their purview.

### 3.10 THE ELECTION OBSERVERS

The EC made a bold and laudable move to accredit 17 organisations as domestic election observers, 5 in Peninsula Malaysia, 9 in Sarawak, and 3 in Sabah. These appointed organisations were empowered to recruit individuals as their accredited observers. The volunteers were managed by the organisations themselves.

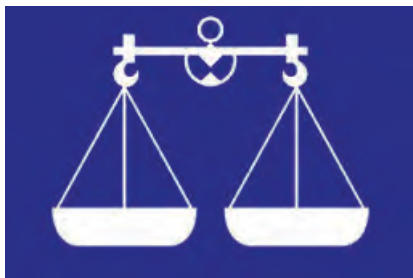
Through the 17 organisations, the EC accredited a total of 1,176 individuals as observers. Selangor had the highest number of observers with 174 people, Sabah 135, Perak 129, Kelantan 122, Kuala Lumpur 94, Sarawak 93 and Johor 83. The EC did not interfere with the recruitment process of observers, and the organisations were given full autonomy to recruit, train and deploy their volunteers within the terms and conditions of their appointment.

The EC had also invited seven individuals each from Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and the Asean Secretariat as international observers. These international observers were taken by the EC to visit several polling stations in Negeri Sembilan, Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. Their visit to Malaysia, as well as their operational costs while conducting their observation was partially funded by the EC.

### 3.11 THE MAIN POLITICAL ACTORS IN GE13

**Barisan Nasional (BN)** is a coalition made up of 13 political parties<sup>1</sup>. BN is a registered entity and uses a common logo to represent all its candidates, regardless of the component party they represent.

BN's predecessor was the Alliance Party (Perikatan), which won the Federation of Malaya's first general election in 1955. The coalition has formed the federal government since Malaya's independence from Britain on 31<sup>st</sup> August, 1957, and frequently commands the crucial 2/3 majority in Parliament that provides them the legal ability to amend the Federal Constitution. Prior to GE13, BN had only lost the 2/3 majority twice; the first in 1969, and second in 2008.



*Logo of BN*

Of the 13 component parties in BN, three are considered the main parties representing the major ethnic groups in Malaysia. The United Malay National Organisation (UMNO) is the biggest and most dominant party, especially in Peninsula Malaysia. The President and Deputy President of UMNO are automatically Chairman and Deputy Chairman of BN, and subsequently Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia. The current President of UMNO is Dato' Seri Mohd Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak (hereafter "Najib Razak") and the Deputy President is Tan Sri Muhyiddin bin Mohammad Yassin (hereafter "Muhyiddin Yassin").

The other two main parties are also ethnic-based: the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). While the rest of the BN component parties in Peninsular

Malaysia do not intentionally target specific ethnic groups, their memberships are mostly dominated by a particular ethnicity.

In Sarawak, the leading BN component party is Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB), which is the largest political party in the state. Members of the party belong to ethnic groups in the Bumiputera category (i.e. the Ibans, Bidayuhs, several other Dayak people as well as Sarawakian Malays). The President of PBB, Pehin Sri Haji Abdul Taib bin Mahmud, has been the Chief Minister of Sarawak since 1981.

In Sabah, the previous state government (prior to its dissolution) was led by Chief Minister Musa Aman from UMNO. UMNO is a relatively new entrant in Sabah, having been formed there in 1991. Two other parties that play significant role in Sabah politics are Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) and United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation (UPKO). All the three parties, together with several smaller parties, form the Sabah BN.

**Pakatan Rakyat (PR)** is the federal opposition, which is a coalition comprising three political parties – Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), the Democratic Action Party (DAP) and Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS).

PR is not a registered coalition. An application to register the coalition with the Registrar of Societies is pending, and this matter is discussed further in Section 4.5. As a result, PR contested in GE13 using three different logos.



*From left to right: Logos of PKR, DAP and PAS*

The head of PR is Dato' Seri Anwar bin Ibrahim (hereafter "Anwar Ibrahim"). In terms of membership, PAS' members are mainly Malay Muslims, DAP members are mainly ethnic Chinese, while PKR has a mix of members from various ethnicities.

<sup>1</sup> <http://barisannasional.org.my/parti-komponen>

There are other, smaller, parties that contested in GE13 such as the **Socialist Party of Malaysia (PSM)** and the **Barisan Jemaah Islamiah Se-Malaysia (BERJASA)** as well as independent candidates. However, the main actors for GE13 were BN and PR.

### 3.12 THE POLITICAL CLIMATE

The 2008 general election was dubbed as a “political tsunami” for the BN as they lost their customary 2/3 majority in the Dewan Rakyat for the first time since 1969. This relatively poor performance led Tun Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi to step down as Prime Minister. He was replaced by his deputy, Najib Razak.

The campaign for GE13 effectively started as soon as Najib Razak became Prime Minister on 3 April 2009. But although political commentators expected him to call for a snap election soon after his leadership succession, Najib Razak actually waited until 3 April 2013 - the fourth anniversary of his premiership, and just 27 days before parliament would have automatically dissolved on 30 April 2013 – to request a dissolution of Parliament from the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

Throughout Najib Razak’s four-year premiership, Malaysia experienced growing populism. Both BN and PR promised or delivered handouts to the public in various disguises, culminating in the publication of their manifestos that contained an extensive list of handout promises. As the party in government, BN introduced various welfare programmes, many of which are aggressively promoted under the “1Malaysia” brand.

Throughout the four years, Malaysia also saw growing racial polarisation. Hardliners from the Malay, Chinese and Indian ethnic groups became increasingly vocal.

In particular, a group of ethnic Malays from the organisation PERKASA became an influential pressure group determined to safeguard what they interpreted as the privilege of Malay “rights”. Senior leaders of PERKASA have been frequently accused of racism. In GE13, BN fielded PERKASA’s Deputy President in the Shah

Alam parliamentary constituency, while in the Pasir Mas parliamentary, the BN candidate did not file his nomination papers, paving the way for PERKASA’s President to contest against the PR candidate in a straight fight. PERKASA has openly supported BN, and former Prime Minister and former UMNO President Tun Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad is PERKASA’s advisor.

Since early 2012, there has also been an increase in the usage of rhetoric surrounding politically related violence. PR leaders had used the Arab Spring to stir public sentiment towards a change and BN leaders reacted by implying that PR was calling for a regime change, including through violence or undemocratic means<sup>1</sup>.

Malaysia also saw sizable demonstrations organised by BERSIH, a coalition of civil society organisations campaigning for free and fair elections. BERSIH held 3 rallies in 2007, 2011 and 2012. In all three demonstrations, the police responded with chemical-laced water cannons and tear gas. An inquiry by the Malaysian Human Rights Commission (SUHAKAM) on 17 April 2013 found that the police was guilty of using disproportionate force against BERSIH demonstrators in 2012. However, various media and BN leaders have insinuated that the BERSIH demonstrators are violent and that they are part of the opposition’s “movement”<sup>2, 3</sup>.

1 Anwar set to create Arab Spring, <http://www.kualalumpurpost.net/anwar-set-to-create-arab-spring-in-malaysia-tun-mahathir-2/>, 7 February 2013, accessed 12.33pm

3 <http://agendadaily.com/Muka-Hadapan/muhyiddin-minta-polis-segera-tunjuk-video-bukti-tidak-bertindak-ganas-masa-demo-bersih.html>; accessed 7 May 2013, 2.35pm.

4 [http://www.utusan.com.my/utusan/info.asp?y=2012&dt=0429&pub=Utusan\\_Malaysia&sec=Muka\\_Hadapan&pg=mh\\_01.htm](http://www.utusan.com.my/utusan/info.asp?y=2012&dt=0429&pub=Utusan_Malaysia&sec=Muka_Hadapan&pg=mh_01.htm); accessed 6 May 2013, 8.13am

BN billboards insinuating that the “other” side is not averse to undemocratic means.



*“We respect the rule of law, not the rule of the jungle”*



*“We develop the country, not demolish it”*

## SECTION 4: WIDER PERSPECTIVES ON GE13

To ensure GE13 is examined within the right context, IDEAS and CPPS conducted a review (long-term observation) of the situation leading up to 5 May 2013. This section provides a critical analysis of the relevant issues that may have an impact on the outcome of GE13.

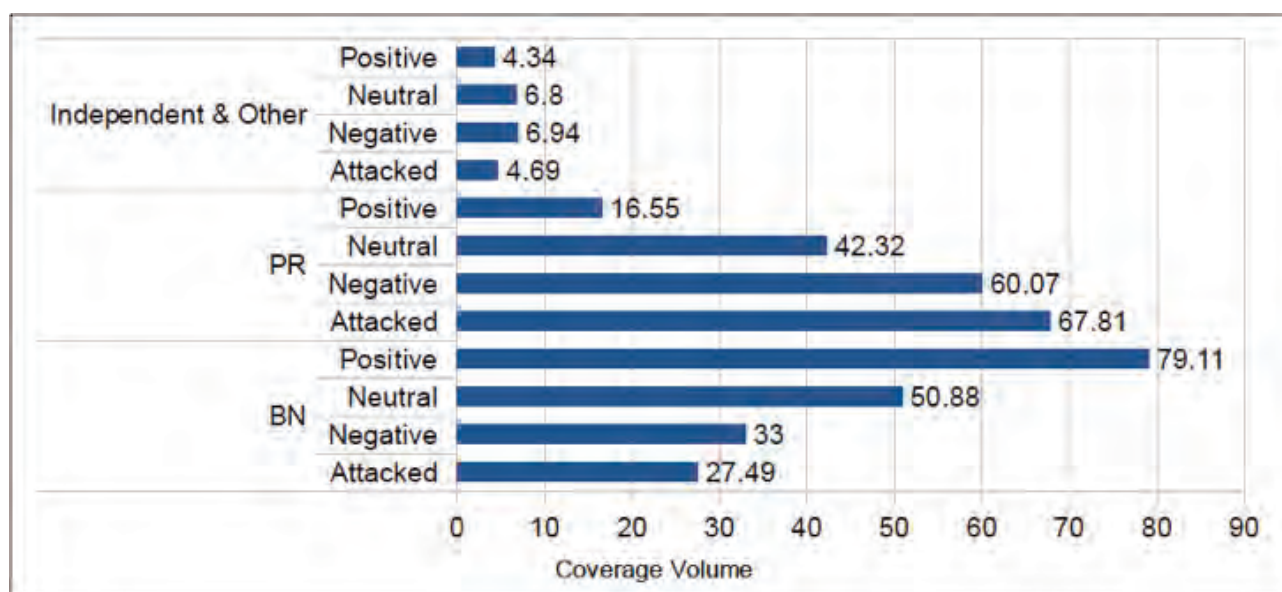
### 4.1 THE MEDIA WAS HEAVILY BIASED TOWARDS BN

Two government agencies have a direct impact on GE13 media campaigning - Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) and the Malaysian National News Agency (Bernama). Both of these agencies are under the Ministry of Information, Communication and Culture.

RTM runs two free-to-air TV channels and several radio stations. Bernama is a content provider for newspapers, TV and radio stations, global wire services and internet news portals. Both openly and consistently favoured BN in their coverage and reporting.

Many other key media organisations are also connected to the government or to BN. For example, Media Prima is a conglomerate that runs 4 TV channels, 4 daily newspapers, and 3 radio channels. The top shareholders of Media Prima are the Employee's Provident Fund, a government-linked investment company, and two UMNO-linked companies, Gabungan Kesturi Sdn Bhd and Altima Inc. The Star, Malaysia's most widely-read English daily newspaper, is linked to BN's MCA while Utusan Malaysia, a Malay daily, is linked to BN's UMNO.

Campaign advertising in the media was overwhelmingly dominated by BN, both in broadcast and print media. However, since party financing and spending in Malaysia are not transparent, we were unable to ascertain the sources of funding for all these advertisements, nor do we know if the parties received significant discounts for their advertisements from the media platforms linked to them.



*Tone of coverage of political parties in Malaysian media during GE13 campaign period.  
(Source: "Watching the Watchdog Release 5", CIJ and UNMC)*





*Top: Muhyiddin Yassin at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Seri Payong, Terengganu on 2 May 2013. (Source: <http://www.pmo.gov.my/tpm/>)*



*Left: Najib Razak at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Sungai Petai, Kelantan on 1 May 2013. (Source: [http://www.utusan.com.my/utusan/Pilihan\\_Raya/20130503/px\\_11/Wujud-negara-Islam-bermaruah#ixzz2SKy2xpLm](http://www.utusan.com.my/utusan/Pilihan_Raya/20130503/px_11/Wujud-negara-Islam-bermaruah#ixzz2SKy2xpLm))*

The government offered PR a 10-minute, pre-recorded slot on RTM to air their manifesto. This offer was rejected by PR on the basis that 10 minutes was insufficient compared to the continuous positive coverage that BN had on almost all TV and radio stations, as well as in the majority of mainstream print media.

The Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ) in partnership with the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus, conducted extensive media monitoring during the GE13 from 7 April to 7 May 2013. Their monitoring confirmed that the media gave a higher positive coverage to BN. BN received the highest level of positive coverage, while PR received the highest level of attacks and negative coverage.

The media environment therefore is heavily dominated by BN-friendly coverage. While this was particularly prevalent during the official campaign period for GE13, in reality it had been going on for many years. This would certainly have an impact on voting decisions.

#### **4.2 GOVERNMENT AND ARMED FORCES FACILITIES WERE REPEATEDLY USED DURING THE OFFICIAL CAMPAIGNING PERIOD**

During the campaign period, we observed repeated usage of government facilities, especially government schools, for BN campaigns. There were also cases of political speeches being delivered in army camps. Often, these events were not organised by the parties and were not officially named as a party event. However, we found the message in the main speeches to be clearly partisan campaigning, calling for voters to vote for BN. PR was not allowed to enter the same facilities. These instances created an uneven field as it allowed BN to campaign using government facilities paid for by taxpayers.



*Top: UMNO Vice President at an event at in Penrissen Army Camp, Sarawak, which was also attended by BN parliamentary candidates for Stampin Datuk Yong Khooon Seng and Kota Samarahan Rubiah Wang. (Source: <http://www.theborneopost.com/2013/04/23/kerajaan-laksana-program-pembangunan-tentera/>)*



*Left: Former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad delivered a talk entitled “Unity towards the 13th General Election” at the Lumut Naval Base on 23 April 2013. BN candidate for Lumut, Kong Cho Ha, also attended. (Source: <http://www.freemalaysiakini2.com/?p=78240>)*

#### 4.3 THE EC’S IMPARTIALITY AND COMPETENCY WERE REPEATEDLY QUESTIONED

The EC has undertaken several steps to improve Malaysia’s electoral processes.

- In dealing with allegations of the existence of ‘phantom’ voters, the EC introduced the indelible ink to prevent multiple voting
- Some efforts have been made to clean up the electoral roll
- Advanced voting was introduced for members of the military and police. Previously there were allegations of wrong-doings<sup>1</sup> when these groups were allowed to vote by post only
- Overseas voting was introduced to enable Malaysians living abroad to cast their vote abroad

- Disabled voters were allowed to be accompanied by a trusted individual into the polling centre to assist them in the voting process
- Several organisations were appointed to be independent election observers

However, despite all the efforts by the EC, they continue to face criticism from many quarters. There is widespread perception that the EC is not politically independent. Three factors may have contributed to this.

Firstly, almost all current members of the EC are from civil service backgrounds and many of EC’s staff is also seconded from the civil service. This raises serious credibility challenge, especially when the issue is examined in the wider context of the civil service itself often being perceived or accused of partisanship<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> or example, it has been alleged that some soldiers did not get their ballot papers because their superiors marked the papers for them, and there have also been accusations that some army officers gave instructions how their men should vote.

<sup>2</sup> See for example Media Selangorku, 25 June 2012, ‘Dato Dr Ali HamsamemulakanlangkahhasilpasebagaiKSN’ (<http://www.selangorku.com/?p=10170>)

Secondly, there were instances in which the EC had issued statements that were inconsistent with the dignity of its office. For example:

- When questioned on the GE13 polling day about the effectiveness of the indelible ink, the Deputy Chairman of the EC was quoted as saying, “I am not worried if the indelible ink is washed off today because tomorrow you cannot vote”<sup>3</sup>. This did not appease public concerns about the supposed indelibility of the ink.
- When the Leader of the Opposition claimed that there were foreigners registered as voters, the Deputy Chairman of the EC was quoted as saying, “He is bluffing. Flat-out bluffing.”<sup>4</sup>. This is disrespectful to the head of an elected block in Parliament.
- When the Leader of the Opposition requested that the Australian Government send observers for GE13, the Deputy Chairman of the EC was quoted as saying that the action was “disgusting and an embarrassment to the people”<sup>5</sup>. This is also disrespectful, and contradicts the EC’s own actions of inviting foreign observers.

In the context of the EC’s remarks about PR leaders, we did not record the EC using the same language towards BN leaders.

Thirdly, the EC was overly-defensive when dealing with criticisms on its internal governance and operations, especially in relation to the revision and cleaning up of the electoral roll. When commenting on the Malaysian Electoral Roll Analysis Project (MERAP) project led by Dr Ong Kian Ming, the Deputy Chairman of the EC was quoted as saying “From the beginning until today, he has never come to the EC to discuss with us or even write us a letter. What kind of a human is this?”<sup>5</sup>. We believe a more appropriate approach would have been for the EC to have initiated a meeting with MERAP.

3 <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/litee/malaysia/article/ec-says-not-worried-about-flawed-indelible-ink> ; accessed 6 May 2013, 8.00am

4 <http://fz.com/content/ge13-how-do-you-know-they-are-foreigners-ec-asks-anwar>

5 <http://www.nst.com.my/nation/general/anwar-rapped-for-overture-to-aussie-govt-1.175559>

#### 4.4 THE INTEGRITY OF THE ELECTORAL ROLL CONTINUES TO BE QUESTIONED

One of the main concerns surrounding GE13 was the integrity of the electoral roll<sup>6</sup>. A survey by Merdeka Center in 2012 found that 92% of voters want the electoral roll cleaned up before GE13, and 48% feels that the present electoral roll was inaccurate<sup>7</sup>.

We examined comments made by various quarters<sup>8</sup>, but found that a study by the Malaysian Electoral Analysis Project (MERAP) to be the most comprehensive. While we observed that MERAP may be viewed as partisan due to its leader joining PR, our analysis found its reports to be robust.

Among others, MERAP discovered that the electoral roll contains multiple cases of:

- voters sharing the same name and address;
- voters sharing the same old Identity Card (IC) number;
- mismatch between gender indicated by IC and data on EC database;
- incomplete house addresses

There are many detailed examples provided by MERAP and readers should refer to their full report<sup>9</sup> for more information.

We also recorded cases of individuals who had not registered as voters finding their names on the electoral roll. For example, the Malaysian Confederation for the Disabled (MCD) received reports of 3 individuals with learning disabilities and another 6 with visual impairments who were on the electoral roll despite never registering themselves as voters.

These cases have fuelled intense speculation, and were further augmented by subsequent developments. For example, when the BN Secretary-General confirmed that “friends of

6 See for example <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/voter-irregularities-still-mar-sabah-electoral-roll-says-polls-watchdog/>

7 <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/litee/malaysia/article/merdeka-center-refutes-ecs-claims-insists-voter-survey-accurate/>

8 Including from Dr Wong Chin Huat of Monash University, and groups like NIEI, MAFREL and Bersih.

9 The full report of MERAP can be found on <http://malaysianelectorallrollproject.blogspot.com/2012/10/merap-final-report-and-recommendations.html>

BN” had chartered flights to ferry voters<sup>1</sup>, the public immediately questioned if the flights were from Sabah, and accused the BN of ferrying in voters and new citizens from Sabah to vote in strategic constituencies in Peninsular Malaysia. We believe these suspicions would have not arisen if the integrity of the electoral roll was guaranteed.

We acknowledge that the EC has worked with organisations like the NIEI to improve the integrity of the system. This leads us to believe that the EC is open to new ideas, but their weakness is that they can only work cordially with organisations that employ a non-confrontational approach.

#### **4.5 THE REGISTRAR OF SOCIETIES IS VIEWED AS NOT FREE FROM PARTISAN INTERFERENCE**

The Registrar of Societies (RoS) is an agency under the Ministry of Home Affairs responsible for the administration of non-governmental organisations and political parties. All political parties are bound by the Societies Act 1966 they must register accordingly. Failure to comply with the Act’s requirements may cause the party to be de-registered<sup>2</sup>.

The RoS’ failure to process PR’s registration application efficiently had a direct impact on GE13, as PR component parties were unable to contest under one logo. Multiple logos may confuse voters.

PR had submitted an application to be recognised as a formal coalition to the Registrar of Societies (RoS) in 2009. In 2011, after the head of the pro-tem committee left the coalition, the RoS stated that the application could not be approved citing the departure of the individual. The component parties subsequently submitted another application to the RoS with details of another person to head the pro-tem committee.

PR has claimed that the RoS is unresponsive and uncooperative until today<sup>3</sup>.

We observe that that was not the only instance of RoS being viewed as being not free from partisan interference:

- The Socialist Party of Malaysia (Parti Sosialis Malaysia, PSM) had to wait 10 years for its registration to be finally approved in 2008.
- On 18 April 2013, PR’s DAP was informed by the RoS that their central executive committee was not recognised. While this stemmed from irregularities during DAP’s party election in December 2012, the RoS’ eleventh hour notification two days before nomination for GE13 created panic.

The RoS dealt with BN differently. For example, in 1987-88, when UMNO was declared illegal by the courts, it took the RoS only days to register a new party called UMNO (Baru), which became today’s UMNO.

#### **4.6 THE DELINEATION OF CONSTITUENCIES IS TOO UNEQUAL**

Malaysia is divided into 222 federal and 576 state constituencies. The EC is empowered to delineate constituencies every ten years. The last delineation exercise was done in 2003.

We have observed serious discrepancies with the electoral principle that every vote must have equal weightage. For example, the Putrajaya constituency has 15,791 voters, but the Kapar constituency has 144,159 voters<sup>4</sup>. Based on this data, Kapar has 9 times more voters than Putrajaya, and hence “one vote” in Putrajaya equals approximately to “9 votes” in Kapar. (See Appendix F for full details)

1 The Star, 2 May 2013, “GE13: Tengku Adnan confirms ‘get out the vote’ flights organised by ‘BN friends’”

2 In particular, under section 5(1), “it shall be lawful for the Minister in his absolute discretion by order to declare unlawful any society or branch or class or description of any societies which in his opinion, is or is being used for purposes prejudicial to or incompatible with the interest of the security of Malaysia or any part thereof, public order or morality.”

3 <http://www.keadilandaily.com/daftar-pakatan-rakyat-tunggu-penjelasan-ros-saifuddin/index.html>; accessed 3 May 2013, 4.30pm.

4 Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya Malaysia, “Statistik Pengundi Biasa dan Pengundi Tidak Hadir Mengikuti Dewan Undangan Negeri, Diwartakan Pada 11 April 2013)”

At the time of Independence, the difference in constituency electorate sizes was limited to a margin of 15% above or below the average constituency electorate. This rule was relaxed in the 1960s and was completely removed in 1973.

As a result, a political party is able win the majority of seats in Dewan Rakyat through winning smaller constituencies, but without receiving the majority of popular votes. We observed that this was what happened in GE13, where BN won the majority of parliamentary seats, but only garnered 46.5% of the popular votes compared to PR's 51.4%<sup>5</sup>.

#### 4.7 THE FINANCING OF POLITICAL PARTIES IS NOT TRANSPARENT

Financial resources are necessary for political parties and candidates to function effectively in modern democratic systems. However, money in politics can pose serious corruption risks. Money can disrupt the democratic principle of fair competition in elections and undermine proper political representation. Problems arise when organisations or individuals with private agendas secretly provide funds to political parties/candidates, especially during elections, and expect something in return.

Both BN and PR recognised fighting corruption as an important issue in GE13. Principles such as “transparency”, “accountability” and “integrity” were widely mentioned in their respective election manifestos. However, we noted numerous examples that highlighted the need for urgent political financing reform. They include:

- It was not possible to verify that campaign expenditure did not exceed the limits set by the Elections Act (RM 200,000 for Parliamentary and RM100,000 for State seats)
- Use of government assets and machinery during the campaign period, as described in Section 4.2.

- Lack of clear guidelines on the role of a caretaker government, thereby allowing the incumbent to enjoy many privileges
- The EC's lack of power to investigate and enforce rules during the campaign period
- Lack of clear and transparent procedures to identify sources and quantum of party contributions<sup>6</sup>

The campaigns that took place during GE13 was visibly expensive for all sides but it was not possible to ascertain who paid and what was the total cost:

- some campaign events catered for audience in the tens of thousands
- flights were chartered to ferry voters paid for by third parties
- various letters and leaflets were sent by post to voters
- there was heavy use of text messaging to canvass and campaign.

#### 4.8 ETHNIC MINORITY PARTICIPATION IN GE13 WAS GOOD BUT MANIPULATION OF RACIAL ISSUES FOR POLITICAL GAINS ABOUND

Since independence, the racial composition of Malaysia had set the tone for the domestic political landscape. Many Malaysian political parties are ethnic-based. This has helped ensure that ethnic minority participation in the electoral process is healthy despite the Malays being the ethnic majority in the country.

Even though there are notable weaknesses such as the level of participation of the Orang Asli (i.e. the native and indigenous people), the Malay majority does not necessarily dominate the political discourse because there are many ethnic-based political parties representing their interests.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.fz.com/content/ge13-pakatan-questions-bn-governments-legitimacy-after-winning-popular-vote>; accessed 7 May 2012, 2.50pm

<sup>6</sup> The case of the RM40million donation to UMNO Sabah is a clear case that showed the need for reform on political financing regulations (<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/macc-clears-musa-aman-rm40m-was-for-sabah-umno>)



Front page of Utusan Malaysia headlined “What else does the Chinese want?”

However, the presence of ethnic-based political parties is also major contributor to divisions in the Malaysian society, especially leading up to GE13.

We observed an increase in the usage of racial rhetoric to obtain votes. The Malay rights<sup>1</sup> organisation PERKASA and the Hindu Rights Action Force (HINDRAF) were two of the most vocal groups pushing for the interests of their respective ethnic groups. We also observed an increase in activism among Chinese associations.

While such championing of rights based on racial criteria could be controversial, for the most part we observed this to be peaceful and within the confines of the democratic process.

However, the rhetoric used when campaigning for Malay rights in the run up to GE13, and immediately after polling, sometimes bordered on the incitement of racial hatred, whether in speeches, publications or SMS messages<sup>2</sup>. Examples of these include:

- PERKASA calling for the mass burning of the Bible<sup>3</sup>
- MCA's print and radio campaign that “A vote for DAP is a vote for PAS”
- Utusan Malaysia's front-paged report “Apa lagi Cina mahu?”

In short, in the GE13 campaigning, Malays were given the impression that if BN were to lose, Chinese Malaysians would benefit at the expense of Malays.

The top leadership of BN has openly recognised that the nation is divided. In his victory speech on 6 May 2013<sup>4</sup>, Najib Razak rejected racial politics, called for national reconciliation, and decried extremism. While this was a much needed move, we believe it was also a very late move. Such a statement should have been made before GE13, when ethnic rhetoric was beginning to be employed by activists campaigning for BN. Najib's delay meant that the GE13 campaign was marred by tactics that nudged voters to vote for BN based on ethnic sentiments.

1 “Rights” in this section being defined by their proponents as protections, benefits, special or guaranteed minimum assurances in various sectors on the basis of ethnic, cultural or linguistic criteria

2 For example, our observer attended an event in Sungai Ramal Dalam in which the speaker openly accused the Chinese of conspiring to remove the special position of the Malays and abolish Islam from being the official religion of the country after GE13. And members of our observation team also received SMS messages suggesting that the Chinese is a threat to Malays, although we must emphasise that the authors of these messages are unknown and not necessarily representing a political party.

3 The Malaysian Insider, 24 January 2013, “Under fire, Perkasa says bible-burning threat meant to prevent violence” (<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/under-fire-perkasa-says-bible-burning-threat-meant-to-prevent-violence>)

4 Press Statement issued by Prime Minister's Office, 6 May 2013 (Hailing Election Victory, PM calls for National Reconciliation)

BN's MCA fear-mongering campaign advertisements.

**Will **DAP** really help Non-Muslims?**

The consensus is that the party which contested the most seats in the state gets to name the mentri besar and in the case of Johor, that party is PAS.

*Dr Ong Kuan Ming, DAP Strategist*  
Source: The Star, 12 April 2013

Non-Muslims must realise that PAS will do what it has set out to do if it gains power.

*Abdman Farnando, Johor DAP Deputy Chairman*  
Source: The Star, 26 April 2013

**Don't let Johor become the next Kedah.**

- Kedah's PAS-led government has implemented policies that compromise the lives of non-Muslims. They include the 20% Bumiputera (Muslim) quota, guidelines forbidding women from performing on stage during Chinese New Year and non-renewal of entertainment licences during Ramadan.  
Source: Newspaper.com, 26 February 2009  
Source: Berita.com.my, 19 March 2011  
Source: Prima.com.my, 19 April 2011
- Kedah businessmen say "Since the state government had few means to generate revenue, deforestation activities were actively carried out near Kuala Kedah, causing the rivers there to be polluted."  
Source: Berita.com.my, 12 April 2011

**PLEASE VOTE BASED ON FACTS.**

**VOTE WISELY**  
DON'T MAKE THE WRONG CHOICE

**A VOTE FOR DAP IS**

**A VOTE FOR PAS**

**WHO SAYS DAP IS GOOD FOR YOU?**  
Vote for Najib's economic transformation. Vote for stability and prosperity.

**VOTE PAKATAN RAKYAT AND HE WILL BE PM.**

*Anwar Ibrahim*

**If they can't manage Kelantan, how can they hope to lead the Federal Government?**

**Check the facts. Use your vote wisely this GE13.**

- HIGHEST NUMBER OF HIV CASES IN MALAYSIA**  
Kelantan: 28.4  
NATIONAL AVERAGE: 12.7  
18 PEOPLE FOR EVERY 10,000
- HIGHEST INCREASE OF REPORTED SAFE CASES IN MALAYSIA**  
Kelantan: 20%  
100  
200
- HIGHEST NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE IN MALAYSIA**  
47,000  
KELANTAN
- DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN INVESTORS ARE SAYING AWAY FROM KELANTAN**  
23 BIL.  
127 MIL.  
KELANTAN KUALA LUMPUR
- CONTAMINATED WATER PIPED TO HALF OF KELANTAN'S SCHOOLS**

**IF YOU VOTE FOR DAP, YOU GIVE POWER TO PAS-CONTROLLED PAKATAN RAKYAT. PLEASE VOTE BASED ON FACTS.**

**VOTE WISELY**  
DON'T MAKE THE WRONG CHOICE

**A VOTE FOR DAP IS**

**A VOTE FOR PAS**

**WHO SAYS DAP IS GOOD FOR DEVELOPMENT?**  
Don't let DAP bring this to Anwar.  
Vote for Najib's economic transformation. Vote for stability and prosperity.

## SECTION 5: KEY OBSERVATIONS FROM THE PERIOD BETWEEN NOMINATION DAY AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULTS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The IDEAS-CPPS observation mission in Peninsula Malaysia was conducted by 311 observers across 99 parliamentary constituencies and 14 observers in 6 overseas polling centres. Our observers engaged with the Returning Officers, political party agents, other election observers, and voters at large to identify concerns.

The findings / trends from our observation, with selected cases as examples of the incidences that we recorded, are outlined below.

#### 5.2.1 Nomination Day (April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013)

The GE13 nomination took place on Saturday, 20 April 2013, between 9.00am and 10.00am. There were no major incidents reported, except in Sungai Acheh where PAS supporters attempted to prevent the PKR candidate from submitting his nomination papers<sup>1</sup>. Most nomination centres opened and closed on time and the process proceeded smoothly.

Data obtained from the EC<sup>2</sup> showed:

- 579 nominations were filed to contest 222 parliamentary seats;
- 1,324 nominations were filed to contest 505 state seats.

All 579 nominations filed to contest the 222 parliamentary seats were accepted by the EC. Of the 1,324 nominations filed to contest for the 505 state seats, 3 were rejected.

In general:

- The environment surrounding nomination centres was peaceful, with supporters respecting the clearly-marked restricted zones surrounding the centres
- Security personnel maintained order, with representation from Polis DiRaja Malaysia (PDRM), including the Federal Reserve Unit, and RELA volunteers
- EC officers dealt with political supporters in a professional and polite manner

However:

- Our observers were not allowed into two nomination centres in Negeri Sembilan<sup>3</sup>
- A few candidates and proposers wore clothing items bearing their party's logo into the nomination center<sup>4</sup>
- Supporters and candidates in some constituencies used government vehicles to arrive at nomination centres<sup>5</sup>
- In Shah Alam, the designated area allocated for the supporters of a PR candidate was further than the area designated for BN supporters (Exhibit A).

2 [http://pru13.gov.my/default.berita.utama.php?news\\_id=86](http://pru13.gov.my/default.berita.utama.php?news_id=86)

3 Seremban (P128) and Kuala Pilah (P129).

4 BN candidates in Seputeh (P122), Segambut (P117) and Bukit Bendera (P48). After receiving complaints from opposition candidates, EC officers instructed BN candidates to put on a jacket or vest to cover the logo.

5 A lorry with a "Lembaga Pertubuhan Peladang" logo was used to distribute water to BN supporters in Kelantan.

1 <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2013/04/21/pas-tried-to-sabotage-chegubard-in-sg-acheh/>





Exhibit A: Google Map image showing the unequal distance between the areas designated to BN and PR supporters in the Shah Alam constituency.

### 5.3 OFFICIAL CAMPAIGN PERIOD (APRIL 20<sup>TH</sup>, 2013 TO MAY 4<sup>TH</sup>, 2013)

Both BN and PR had been unofficially campaigning since 2009, with increasing intensity as April 2013 became closer. Therefore political party paraphernalia, such as flags, banners and posters had been on display since weeks if not months before the commencement of the official campaigning period.

During the official campaign period, we observed campaign events including rallies, walkabouts, and talks.

The followings are highlights of our observation during the campaign period:

- The use of government machinery for campaigning purposes was rampant, especially by the BN. This ranged from the use of government buildings for operation centres and campaigns, to using security forces to maintain order during campaigns.
- We observed several incidences of politically-related violence and provocations. 1,166 cases of violence and intimidation were reported during the first week of the formal campaign period alone<sup>6</sup>. Among these cases were the hurling of petrol bombs into a BN

operation centre in Sekinchan (Selangor)<sup>7</sup> and Jelapang (Perak)<sup>8</sup>, the torching of a car belonging to PKR candidate Dr Xavier Jayakumar, several cases of explosive devices against BN campaign activities<sup>9</sup> and several cases of arson against BN operation centres.

- Free food, musical concerts and gifts were hosted, mostly by BN and at times under the disguise of government events. In Cameron Highlands, for example, a concert was hosted by Tabung Ekonomi Kumpulan Usaha Niaga (TEKUN) which is a unit within the Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-based Industries. The event was used to “introduce” the BN parliamentary candidate for Cameron Highlands. Concert attendees were seen receiving TV sets and kitchen appliances.
- We observed many political speeches that were peaceful and constructive. However, we also observed several political speeches by both the BN and PR that were laced with racial and religious sentiments and slander. In Kubang Kerian, the alleged sex video clip of PR leaders were played to a crowd which also included children.
- Strategies to incite fear in the public was propagated by BN. For example, one of our observers managed to attend a closed-door briefing organised by UMNO at Sungai Ramal Dalam, Selangor. The speaker warned the audience that the Malaysian Chinese wanted to abolish the monarchy and remove Islam from being Malaysia’s official religion.

<sup>6</sup> <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2013/4/27/nation/13031550&sec=nation>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.tv3.com.my/beritatv3/berita\\_terkini/Bilik\\_Gerakan\\_BN\\_Sekinchan\\_Terbakar\\_Dilempar\\_Bom\\_Petrol.html](http://www.tv3.com.my/beritatv3/berita_terkini/Bilik_Gerakan_BN_Sekinchan_Terbakar_Dilempar_Bom_Petrol.html); accessed 4 May 2013, 10.27am.

<sup>8</sup> <http://peraktoday.com/?p=115309>, accessed 4 May 2013, 10.30am.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/227885>; accessed 4 May 2013, 10.25am.



Exhibit B: Booklet “*Siapa Anwar Sebenarnya*” circulated in Permatang Pauh. Among others, the booklet accused Anwar Ibrahim of being born out of wedlock

- Printed publications, blog posts and text messages advocating hatred against ethnic Chinese were widely distributed, alleging that they would “overcome” the Malays if BN were to lose power.<sup>1</sup> We were not able to verify who actually produced these materials.

#### 5.4 OVERSEAS VOTING (APRIL 28TH, 2013)

The voting process for Malaysians residing overseas took place on 28 April 2013. Overseas voters had the option to either cast their ballots at selected Malaysian embassies and high commissions around the world, or post the ballot papers to their respective Returning Officers by 5pm on 5 May 2013.

Our observers observed the voting in Paris, France; London, United Kingdom; Berne, Switzerland; Los Angeles, USA; Dubai, UAE; and Hong Kong.

The voting process in general proceeded smoothly with the majority of the voters opting to cast their votes in the embassies and

high commissions. The embassies and high commissions were generally conducive for voting with the staff acting impartially and professionally.

All observers, except in Dubai, were given permission to observe the voting process. Some of them were allowed to observe the placing of ballot collection bags into diplomatic pouches and the counting of remaining ballots.

Some of the key highlights from our observation:

- Information on how to register as an overseas voter was unclear and convoluted
- The approach to determine the criteria to be an overseas voter was not clear
- The online portal to register as an overseas voter crashed on the day that was the deadline to register as an overseas voter, preventing some from registering
- There were discrepancies in the list of voters, resulting in certain voters unable to vote as their ballot papers were not in the envelope or their names did not appear in the list<sup>2</sup>.
- Some embassy staff, tasked to be officers for that day, were not fully conversant on the procedures<sup>3</sup>.

#### 5.5 ADVANCED VOTING (APRIL 30TH, 2013)

Advanced voting was conducted on 30 April 2013, at 544 polling centers nationwide<sup>4</sup>. Voters on this day comprised mainly of security personnel and their families who would be on duty on Election Day.

The advanced voting process was generally peaceful and orderly. Polling centres opened and closed on time, and most observers and party agents were able to witness the ballot boxes being secured and transferred to their respective secured rooms.

<sup>1</sup> For example, one SMS received by one of our observers on 4 May 2013 stated “DAP memang nak lemahkan Islam dan orang Melayu. Elok lah undi BN” (DAP wants to weaken Islam and the Malays. It is better to vote for BN). Our observers were also given a leaflet entitled “DAP Rasis” by activists at an UMNO Operations Room in Bagan Serai, Perak.

<sup>2</sup> This happened in Paris and Los Angeles.

<sup>3</sup> This happened in Paris and Los Angeles.

<sup>4</sup> SPR’s Press Conference on 28 April 2013 on Advanced Voting. [http://pru13.org/pdf/lain-lain/Kenyataan\\_Media\\_28\\_April\\_2013.pdf](http://pru13.org/pdf/lain-lain/Kenyataan_Media_28_April_2013.pdf)

Some of the key highlights from our observation:

- There were reports about the ineffectiveness of the indelible ink not long after the voting process started. These complaints continued throughout the day
- Candidates visited polling centres while attired in clothing bearing their parties' logo. In Hulu Langat, for example, a PR candidate entered the polling center wearing a PR shirt.
- There were reports of confusion among voters on the process of voting, with some voters placing marked ballot papers in the wrong ballot box (mixing up parliamentary and state boxes) and others using their inked finger to mark their ballot papers.
- Some observers were denied entry into polling centres. These included observers in Machang, Kangar, Lembah Pantai, Bukit Katil, Batu and Segambut
- Observers in Selangor were only allowed to observe the voting process in certain polling streams, and were not allowed to move around the polling centre

## 5.6 POLLING DAY (5 MAY 2013)

Polling Day was conducted on the 5 May 2013 at 8245 polling centers<sup>10</sup>. A voter turn-out of approximately 80% was reported by the EC.<sup>11</sup>

Our observers were stationed in 99 of the 165 parliamentary constituencies in Peninsula Malaysia. We found that generally:

### *a) Around polling centres*

- The atmosphere surrounding polling centres was conducive during the voting process.
- Police personnel were present at all polling centres observed.
- Political parties were still reported to be campaigning during polling day in certain areas.

### *b) Inside polling centres*

- While most observers reported a smooth process of verifying voters, there were several cases of registered voters who were unable to vote as their names were not on the electoral roll.
- Long queues led to overcrowding at certain polling centres. Certain polling centres did not have priority lanes for elderly voters.

### *c) Opening of polling centers, voting and closing*

- In general, most polling stations observed opened and closed on time. Slight delays were reported in the opening of certain polling stations.
- A small number of voters were informed that they had already voted, although they claimed that they had not.
- Some polling streams in the same polling centre provided pencils instead of pens for voters to mark their ballot papers.
- Some voters encountered blots on their ballot papers. Some of them were not issued new ballot papers despite requesting them from the polling clerks.
- Polling clerks used different methods to identify and verify the details of voters. Some drew a line under the name and serial number of the voter. Others crossed off their names or drew shorter lines between the voter's name and serial number.
- Some polling clerks wrote down the serial number of voters in separate sheets and were observed carrying additional notebooks.
- The placement of voting booths in certain polling streams faced open doors or windows, hence creating the possibility that someone else could see how the ballot paper was marked.

#### *d) Counting of votes and the aggregation and tallying of results*

- Observers reported a smooth vote counting process done within the respective polling streams. Although there were certain disputes during the counting of votes, observers noted that such incidences were mostly dealt with fairly and competently by the EC official on duty.

### **5.7 CHALLENGES FACED BY THE DISABLED AND ELDERLY ON ELECTION DAY**

Generally, we feel that more could have been done to assist the elderly and the disabled on election day.

At several polling centres, the disabled and the elderly had to cast their vote in polling streams on the first floor instead of having designated streams on the ground floor.

There was a general lack of wheelchairs provided for the disabled and elderly voters,

Elderly voters were not provided priority lines, and had to join the queue with other voters.

A more detailed examination of issues faced by the disabled will be released by the Malaysian Confederation for the Disabled as they conducted specialised observation on disability issues.

### **5.8 THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF THE INDELIBLE INK**

In GE13, the EC introduced the indelible ink as a measure to prevent an individual from voting multiple times. The ink was used during the advanced voting day on 30 April 2013, and on the normal voting day on 5 May 2013.

After the voter's identity is confirmed, the ink is applied on the person's left index finger. The voter's ballot paper is then issued. If a voter does not have the left index finger, the ink is then applied according to a guideline issued by the EC.

There were two main issues related to the usage of the indelible ink in GE13:

First, by the afternoon of the advanced voting day, we received reports that the ink could actually be washed off. In most cases, the ink only faded away. We received similar complaints on normal voting day. Again, in most cases, the ink had actually faded. However, one voter who visited our secretariat on the afternoon of 5 May 2013 demonstrated that the ink from his finger had been completely removed through normal hand washing, with no traces of the ink observed. In total, there were at least 100 police reports lodged by voters claiming that the ink on their fingers had been completely erased<sup>1</sup>.

Second, the ink did not dry as quickly as the EC said it would. The EC claimed that the ink would take only a few seconds to dry, thereby ensuring that the ballot papers, which were issued after the ink had been applied, would not be smudged. However we found there was a wide variation in the quantity and thickness of the ink applied by different polling centre clerks, which affected how long the ink took to dry<sup>2</sup>. As a result, at some polling centres, there were complaints about the ink smudging the ballot paper. Nevertheless, many of our observers noted that the ballot papers were still considered valid during the counting process despite being stained/smudged.

We observed that the indelible ink issue resulted in further criticism against the EC. We also observed the EC's response to this matter on polling day and found it to be dismissive:

- The Chairperson of the EC appeared on TV showing his left index finger, saying that he had tried washing the ink off to no avail;
- The Deputy Chairperson of the EC shared that he was not worried about the indelible ink disappearing as voters could not vote twice anyway

We believe this simplistic approach failed to appease the public, and fuelled even more distrust towards the EC.

1 <http://elections.thestar.com.my/story.aspx?file=/2013/5/7/nation/13076863#UYkRsQJHKS0>; accessed 7 May 2013, 10.30pm.

2 In fact, one of our observers recorded that the ink was still not fully dry after 20 minutes, and smudged his car steering wheel as he was driving away from the polling centre.

## 5.9 PHANTOM VOTERS

While the overall election process proceeded with no major incidences, we observed verbal and physical confrontations against several individuals who resembled foreigners. This was because the public suspected that they were illegally voting as foreigners.

There were reports that foreigners had been flown into Peninsula Malaysia just days before Polling Day. This created heightened awareness and may have contributed to the public acting as vigilantes.

The concerns of the public were justified, especially if this issue is examined in the context of the lack of trust in the integrity of the electoral roll. We believe this issue is directly related to problems associated with the electoral roll as discussed in Section 4.4. However, we were not able to verify if the alleged foreigners were indeed foreigners, or they were actually Malaysians who looked like foreigners.

## 5.10 SUMMARY

Despite the various technical issues, we found that the overall election process proceeded smoothly and the vast majority of the glitches were not major. Many of these issues were rectified by the EC officers on duty immediately. We also found most nomination and polling centres to be well organised.

There were a number of provocative and intimidating acts during this period but we felt that members of the locality and party activists handled these situations well.

We observed a relatively new and very worrying trend, which was the use of explosive devices in this campaign. The police are still investigating these cases and in most instances the perpetrators have yet to be identified.

We also found the effectiveness of the indelible ink to be questionable, and the allegations of phantom voters to be plentiful. However, we feel that both these issues are related to the integrity of the electoral roll.

## **SECTION 6: CONCLUDING REMARKS – WAS GE13 FREE AND FAIR?**

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### **6.1 THE EC HAS UNDERTAKEN VARIOUS INITIATIVES, BUT FAILS TO OBTAIN CONFIDENCE FROM A SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF THE PUBLIC**

The EC had initiated several important reforms before GE13. There were efforts to clean up the electoral roll, and prevent double voting by introducing the indelible ink. The EC had also implemented several recommendations from the Parliamentary Select Committee on Electoral Reform, such as allowing overseas voting and lengthening the campaigning period.

A key issue that remains unresolved is the lack of integrity in the electoral roll. We believe that many secondary issues – the ineffectiveness of the indelible ink, the existence of phantom voters, the ferrying of voters to strategic constituencies, etc. – originate from one root cause, which is the lack of trust in the integrity of the electoral roll.

While the electoral roll is managed by the EC, the National Registration Department (NRD) also plays a very important role in addressing this issue. Once an individual receives an identity card, his or her details are placed in the NRD database. Currently, the EC has no choice but to accept this person into the electoral roll if he or she registers as a voter. Thus the integrity of the electoral roll is highly dependent on the accuracy of data supplied by the NRD. This means a necessary prerequisite to improve the electoral roll's integrity is improving the integrity of the NRD database.

Many parties have brought these issues to the EC's attention. Unfortunately the EC has failed to handle these criticisms constructively, and a strong example is their reaction to the indelible ink issue.

The EC could not convince stakeholders that there are certain issues that are beyond their purview. Additionally, the EC was unable to build positive relationships with those who could be their allies in improving the electoral process.

This lack of a coherent stakeholder engagement strategy has resulted in a significant proportion of the public distrusting the EC, despite the many initiatives that it has undertaken.

### **6.2 THE CONDUCT OF GE13 MUST NOT BE EXAMINED IN ISOLATION**

Despite the critical issues above, our observation indicated that the EC functioned generally well during the period between the dissolution of parliament and polling day. Most procedures and operations were conducted smoothly and there were no major glitches during nomination, advanced voting, normal voting, counting and the announcement of results.

The larger problem was the events leading up to the election period. Multiple institutional abuses tainted its conduct, particularly the strong bias observed in the media, the rampant usage of government machinery for partisan purposes, and the actions of government agencies that were viewed as partisan. The aggregate actions of these influential institutions contributed to an uneven contest in GE13 that strongly favoured BN.

### 6.3. WAS GE13 FREE AND FAIR?

When benchmarked against the standards set by the IPU Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections, we found that certain aspects of the declaration were fulfilled. For example:

- In general, those qualified were given the right and the physical freedom to vote;
- There was equal opportunity for candidature in multiple political parties; and
- Parties were able to campaign throughout the country with no major restrictions

However, our observation mission found serious flaws when assessing the complete freedom and the fairness of GE13:

- BN's dominance of state-owned and state-linked media meant that the public did not have access to competing views, and PR was not able to inform the public about their agenda
- Government facilities and machinery such as schools and armed forces bases were openly used for campaigning by BN
- The integrity of the electoral roll continues to be questioned with multiple evidence of discrepancies
- The body tasked to administer the registration of political parties was not seen to be free from partisan views
- The delineation of constituencies was too uneven
- Political financing was not transparent and there was no avenue for observers to ascertain the sources and quantum of party financing
- Ethnic issues were exploited for partisan purposes

Based on the above, and having conducted an independent and impartial observation of the elections, IDEAS and CPPS conclude that GE13 was only partially free and not fair<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> This is in relations to the standards set by the IPU Declaration on the Criteria for Free and Fair Elections.

## SECTION 7: RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. APPOINTMENT OF ELECTION OBSERVERS

*The process to appoint and accredit international and domestic independent election observers must be made more transparent and consistent*

Immediately after GE13, the EC should develop and publish a clear and consistent process to appoint domestic election observers. The criteria for selection and the appointment process of observers should be transparent and accessible to the public.

Any organisation interested to be appointed as observers should be allowed to apply to the EC for accreditation. We believe a competitive and transparent process will ensure that only the most effective organisations would obtain accreditation as election observers.

The terms and conditions of appointment of future election observation missions should be benchmarked against international standards. These conditions should not be easily amended to avoid the EC arbitrarily imposing new conditions during the observation process.

*The appointment of independent election observers should be accompanied by sufficient seed funds*

As election observation missions are costly, the EC should provide sufficient seed funding to appointed organisations, with the strict understanding that these organisations operate independently from the EC. No conditions or restrictions should be attached to the funding, as the appointed organisation must also observe the conduct of the EC in the election process. Appointed election observers should have the liberty to

raise additional funds from other domestic and international sources if they deemed necessary.

*The appointment of independent election observers should be made as early as possible*

The EC should issue appointment letters to election observers as early as possible. Since the Malaysian state and federal legislatures operate on five-year terms, and the date of Malaysia's general election is not fixed in advance, the EC should appoint independent election observers immediately following GE13 for a period equivalent to the parliamentary term of the government. These appointed organisations should be free to observe all elections during their accreditation period. However, the appointment of these organisations may be revoked at any time if they are found to have breached their terms of appointment through an independent inquiry.

### B. IMPROVING THE EC

**Members of the EC should explicitly be made accountable to, and be appointed by, a permanent and bipartisan special parliamentary committee.** This parliamentary committee should have the power to advise the Yang di-Pertuan Agong on the appointment and removal of EC members.

**Members of the EC should be recruited transparently from among experts in the field,** preferably employing a competitive application and headhunting process. The key criteria for EC membership should be the individual's core competence and their ability to command public confidence.

**The EC should have the powers to recruit and manage its own staff, independent from the civil service.** The current approach of seconding staff from the civil service should stop, though former and existing civil servants should not be barred from applying.

**The EC should devise a coherent public relations strategy,** which must include a policy that prevents any EC member from making statements that could be construed as politically partisan.



### **C. IMPROVING THE ELECTORAL ROLL**

The EC must open its doors to more specialist groups who have undertaken in-depth studies about the electoral roll.

We also urge such groups to take a co-operative and non-confrontational approach to work together with the EC to improve the integrity of the electoral roll, or even the electoral process as a whole.

### **D. IMPROVING POLITICAL PARTY REGISTRATION PROCESS**

The method of registering political parties must be reformed. One option is for the RoS to be freed from political influence, with matters related to registration and administration of political parties overseen by a cross-partisan body. Alternatively, the whole system could be reformed and overhauled similar to the United Kingdom, when the country reformed their system through the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act in 2000.

### **E. CONSTITUENCY SIZES SHOULD BE NORMALISED**

The next delineation exercise must ensure equal representation of votes. We recommend that the discrepancy is limited to no more than 15% from the average constituency in each state, in line with our original constitution in 1957.

### **F. POLITICAL FINANCING**

A more transparent system for political financing must be developed. Transparency International Malaysia has conducted extensive research on the issue of political financing and they have submitted their recommendations on the matter. We urge the Government as well as the EC to continue engaging TI-M on this matter.