

Press Statement from BERSIH 2.0

16 February 2021

GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO RECOGNISE YOUTH VOTERS NOW, NO MORE FLIP-FLOPS

The Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (BERSIH 2.0) questions the commitment of the Perikatan Nasional (PN) government to enable Malaysian youths age 18 years old and above to register as voters for next elections. If PN honestly recognises the voices and roles of young people as pillars of this country, they should immediately gazette the Constitution (Amendment) Bill 2019, otherwise known as the Undi 18 Bill to enable citizens who have reached the age of 18 to register as voters.

BERSIH 2.0 questions the government based on a statement allegedly from the Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports YB Senator Wan Ahmad Fayhsal, where he said that 18 year old Malaysians are not yet ready to vote in the election and need an institutionalised political education first(1). A statement in a similar vein was also issued earlier by the Speaker of the Dewan Negara, Tan Sri Rais Yatim who said that 18 year-olds are not ready because they have not faced the reality of life and therefore should not shoulder the responsibility to determine the direction of the country(2).

BERSIH 2.0 would like to remind that maturity in voting and political awareness should not be limited to those who are 21 and above because age alone does not determine a person's maturity level. Those who are older and said to be 'wiser' also do not necessarily have more understanding of our political system and the role of state institutions.

The voice of the youth should be respected and taken into account. They are the inheritors of this nation and their voice on issues and challenges that this nation faces should not be denied as this will impact them in the future.

We agree that civil and political education to expose youth to democratic and electoral issues is a good idea but this should not be used as an excuse to stop the efforts to involve the youth as voters in elections. Efforts to educate and involve the people in determining the direction of our country must go hand in hand continuously.

Moreover, the constitutional amendment was previously supported by 211/222 MPs in the Dewan Rakyat. Delaying the process of gazetting the Undi 18 Bill is denying the will of the Dewan Rakyat. Flip-flop statements by politicians, such as Wan Fayhsal and Rais Yatim, who hold key positions in the government only goes to show that the PN government does not take the decision of the Dewan Rakyat seriously.

BERSIH 2.0 once again urges the PN government to immediately gazette the Constitution (Amendment) Bill 2019 to enable Malaysians who have reached the age of 18 to register as voters even though automatic registration is not yet implemented.

Released by,

The Steering Committee of BERSIH 2.0

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