

GENERATION X



**OVER 2 MILLION
MALAYSIANS
WILL REACH VOTING
AGE IN THREE YEARS.**

**ANOTHER 4 MILLION
WERE NOT REGISTERED
DURING GE2008.**

IT'S TIME WE SHARED THE POWER OF 'X'

By Farrah Naz Karim

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PUTRAJAYA: It should have been more than 16 million, but because of apathy, Malaysia has only about 11 million registered voters.

Figures show that more than four in 10 Malaysians above 21 have not registered as voters.

Election Commission deputy chairman Datuk Wan Ahmad Wan Omar said about 2.8 million Bumiputeras of voting age had not registered and they make up 60 per cent of the total.

The EC obtained the figures after studying the citizenship data of those above 21.

Selangor has the most unregistered voters with 787,500 followed by Johor (605,000).

Other states with large numbers of unregistered voters are Perak with 527,000, Sarawak (475,000), Kuala Lumpur (350,000), Kedah (317,000) and Sabah (280,000).

Wan Ahmad said the numbers would be higher considering about 450,000 people reached the eligible voting age each year.

“If there are no serious efforts to create awareness of the importance of registering as voters, the number will increase.

“The ‘I-couldn’t-care-less’ attitude or failure to understand the importance of voting are the main causes of this problem.”

But the EC has noticed a significant surge in new voters when a general election is around the corner.

Wan Ahmad said political parties, non-governmental organisations and resident associations should encourage the public to register with the EC.

He said people could register at the 690 computerised post offices, mobile EC counters or with the 2,245 representatives of political parties appointed for the task.

On automatic registration, he said this would require amendments to Article 119 (1) of the Federal Constitution, which stipulates a citizen is eligible for registration as a voter if he meets the set conditions including being 21, residing at any election divisions in Malaysia and has not lost his rights as a voter.

He said at present, the National Registration Department database was the EC's main source of reference and records showed that the home addresses of more than three million people did not match the addresses on their MyKad.

He said this was another possible hiccup should automatic registration be allowed. "The EC is concerned that the election process may go haywire because of this.

"In the end, this would also adversely affect the percentage of voters."

He said the indelible ink bought for use in the 12th general election was destroyed on Nov 25, as its shelf life had expired. The EC bought 47,000 bottles of the ink, which is made in India, for

about RM2 million.

The commission decided not to use it following reports that certain quarters had bought similar ink to create confusion.