



January 25, 2012.

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YB Datuk Seri,

Proposal for Consideration

On behalf of the NUJ, we are submitting our proposals on the how the Election Commission should handle the public and private media, and conduct of ceramah during the general election/ by-elections.

1. Profile of National Union of Journalists Peninsular Malaysia (NUJ).

- a. The NUJ is the oldest interest group in the country to represent working journalists.
- b. Set up on August 30, 1962, its 1,400 membership currently consist of journalists, photographers and editorial artists from seven daily newspaper and magazine publishers.
- c. It is also in the process of recruiting journalists from news portals like Malaysiakini, Malaysian Insider and Free Malaysia Today. Membership is also opened to journalists from the broadcast media.
- d. NUJ's objectives in its union rules are, among others, to defend press freedom and maintain high ethical standards among journalists

2. The Journalism Profession.

- a. We are members of the communication profession. Journalists are to provide reliable information for everyone to take part in the democratic decision making process.
- b. As such, it is the duty of the journalists to supply all individuals with diverse information for them to make decisions later.



- c. Freedom of the press must also mean the freedom of the media to publish information and opinions without censorship.
- d. Journalists must ultimately serve their readers, viewers and listeners.

3. The Election Commission.

- a. The Federal Constitution states that in appointing members of the Election Commission, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong shall have regard to the importance of securing a Commission which enjoys public confidence.
- b. As such the NUJ feels, Commission members should discharge their constitutional duty without fear or favour.

4. NUJ's proposal to the Parliamentary Select Committee on electoral reforms.

- a. The Commission must be empowered to form a media monitoring committee that will include issuing guidelines to print, broadcast and on-line media.
- b. This is to ensure the media engages in fair reporting so that voters have access to balanced views for them to make their choice. The committee should be on duty from the time the Dewan Rakyat/ State Assemblies are dissolved until election results are announced. In the case of by-elections, the committee should spring into action from the time there is a casual vacancy until election results are announced.
- c. Public Media - RTM and Bernama News, Bernama Radio and Bernama Television.
 - i. The ruling government will become caretaker government and they should be prohibited from totally monopolising state facilities (RTM and Bernama).
 - ii. This is because these public media are funded by taxpayers.
 - iii. NUJ proposes that the number of hours allocated for political parties to campaign over radio and television should be based on the percentage of parliamentary seats won in the last election or on the percentage of parliamentary seats currently they are contesting.
 - iv. Representatives from both the caretaker government and opposition should be given time to campaign "live" during prime time over radio and television.
 - v. Bernama, like private media, should subscribe to ethical reporting, and provide fair and balanced coverage to all parties.

5. Private Media - Online news portal, newspapers, broadcast stations including Astro.

- a. They should also subscribe to ethical reporting and provide fair coverage.
 - i. The right to reply must be given if the media carries adverse report about a party or candidate.
 - ii. Newspapers and on-line media must sell space to political parties which want to advertise their manifesto.

6. The Commission can draw up regulations for media committee to enforce regulations under the conduct of election in the Election Act 1958. It should be emphasised that no candidates, agents or political parties through the media before and during the election make statements to promote feelings of ill will, discontent or hostility as stated under section 4A of the Election Offences Act 1954.

7. The Commission through the committee should censure the irresponsible media and display complaints received from aggrieved parties in its website.

8. Apart from ensuring a free media during the election, the Commission must see that the police sparingly and speedily approve permits for political parties and independent candidates to conduct ceramah. The role of the police is to ensure public safety and order. If two opposing parties are conducting ceramah which is close to one another, police should distance them to prevent any untoward incident.

9. Conclusion.

A free and fair election is an important component of a functional parliamentary democracy.

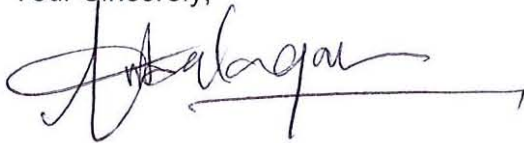
Voters must be given the free will to elect their wakil rakyat, their Federal Government and State Governments who will make decisions on their behalf over the next five years.

Thus, electorates must have ready access to information, news and commentaries for them to make an informed decision.

The Commission must ensure the media, whose business is to sell information and influence the public, play the role of a unbiased referee.

Undisputed election results will give legitimacy to the new government/s and the mandate to administer the states and the federation.

Your Sincerely,



V. Anbalagan

General Secretary

National Union of Journalist Peninsular Malaysia.

c.c.

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