

« **Malaysia** « **Bersih welcomes EC's 'change of attitude'**

Saturday 21 July 2018, by [ALHADJRI Alyaa](#) (Date first published: 14 July 2018).

Bersih has welcomed the Election Commission's recent "change of attitude" after it sent a representative to attend the launch of its post-14th general election findings report.

Executive director Yap Swee Seng lauded the EC's presence at the launch as "historic," stating that it indicates a shift in attitude towards civil society.

"We hope this change of attitude is not temporary, but a long-lasting one to pave way for a better collaborative relationship between the EC and civil society to ensure free and fair elections and strengthen our democracy," he told *Malaysiakini* when contacted.

According to Yap, the attitude is a welcome about-turn, especially given EC chief Mohd Hashim Abdullah's apparent refusal to meet the electoral reforms groups prior to GE14.

"Hashim did not meet with Bersih at all since he took over. We requested to meet him at least twice in relation to GE14 in 2018," he revealed.

Despite the lack of engagement before the polls, Yap revealed that it was the EC that had made the first move to invite Bersih to be election observers in the Sungai Kandis by-election next month.

"We did not ask. It was the EC who invited us to be observers," he said.

On Thursday, Yap confirmed that the EC agreed to [allow](#) Bersih to send 38 observers for the Aug 4 Sungai Kandis by-election.

The Selangor state seat fell vacant following the [death](#) of PKR incumbent Mat Shuhaimi Shafiei on July 2.

Commissioners have to step down

Despite welcoming the EC's change of attitude, Yap reiterated Bersih's call for the resignation of its current set of commissioners, who had allegedly failed in their duties to carry out a free and fair election.

"The six commissioners must still resign to take responsibility for the fraud and mismanagement of GE14, so that a truly new chapter of a good working relationship can begin," he said.

When launching Bersih's report yesterday, Yap pointed out that the five current EC commissioners are from the civil service, including one from the police force.

The report, which was co-authored by human rights groups Pusat Komnas and Suaram, suggested a public process of appointments via a nomination committee.

'More needs to be done by EC'

Asked whether there are established procedures in other countries for election management bodies to interact with civil society, Yap said one of the ways in which this interaction occurs is the recognition of independent election observers.

In GE14, the EC officially **rejected** a request by the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) to act as election observers.

This was despite its earlier announcement that representatives of electoral management bodies from at least seven countries - Indonesia, Thailand, Maldives, Timor Leste, Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan - had been **allowed** to observe the election.

At the time, Bersih **demande**d the EC to be more transparent and provide more information about these international observers, who largely came from less established democracies.

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