

For immediate release

MEDIA STATEMENT

IDEAS: Postponement of Undi18 and automatic voter registration is disrespectful of Parliament's mandate

Kuala Lumpur, 26 March 2021: The Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS) is very disappointed at the Election Commission's decision to only implement Undi18 and automatic voter registration (AVR) after 1st September 2022. This delay is unwarranted as the constitutional amendment to lower the voting age was passed unanimously by Parliament in 2019, a display of bipartisanship rarely seen in Malaysia.

Chairman of the Election Commission (EC) Abdul Ghani Salleh expressed that the implementation is disrupted by the pandemic and Movement Control Order (MCO). However, the EC must explain the three-year delay to implement Undi18 and AVR as a large part of the work requires data processing, which should not be difficult even during the pandemic.

"The EC's latest record shows that there are 5.6 million Malaysians aged 18 and above, with 1.2 million aged between 18 and 20 years old. Delaying the two initiatives denies the 1.2 million of their right to vote when the law has already been gazetted by Parliament", comments Aira Azhari, manager of the Democracy and Governance Unit at IDEAS.

"If 18 year olds in Malaysia are treated as adults in court and are no longer seen as juveniles when an offence is committed, they must also be granted the right to exercise their democratic right to vote. 18 year olds will also be able to contest as candidates in the upcoming elections for Perak, Perlis, Kelantan, Terengganu, Sabah and Sarawak but they will not be allowed to vote", concludes Aira.

IDEAS stands behind Undi18 and urges the EC to take accountability for their lack of action and transparency. Lowering the voting age is crucial to further expand Malaysia's democratic space and it is important that we allow the younger citizens to partake in politics.

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About IDEAS

The Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS) is a nonprofit research institute, dedicated to promoting solutions to public policy challenges, focussing on three overarching missions – advancing a competitive economy, ensuring trust in institutions and promoting an inclusive Malaysia. IDEAS is Malaysia's first independent think tank, free of personal interests and partisan influences. For more information, visit www.ideas.org.my.

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