



**CAMBRIDGE MALAYSIAN EDUCATION
AND DEVELOPMENT TRUST (CMEDT)**

**MALAYSIAN COMMONWEALTH
STUDIES CENTRE (MCSC)**



**Seventeenth Cambridge Conference on Electoral Democracy
in the Commonwealth**

The Møller Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge

Thursday 26 and Friday 27 July 2018

Participants are cordially reminded that the sessions of the conference are confidential, operating informally under 'Chatham House rules'. In this way participants can be entirely frank and candid in their discussions and learn from each other's experience: the style of our conference is to allow maximum flexibility for participants to converse freely.

*In order to make best use of the limited time we have together, we invite participants to submit – in advance, if possible – a very brief summary of important issues arising in their jurisdictions during the past year, to which they wish to draw the attention of their colleagues. It will be especially useful to include in these summaries any issues that are particularly relevant to the theme of the conference. The papers will either be circulated to all participants or, where necessary, distributed on arrival in Cambridge - and **will be taken as read**. Participants will be invited to refer to these papers during discussion, where relevant: we have found that this approach means that we can proceed entirely without repetition of material set out in advance, and without the need for formal presentations, thus encouraging the flexible and open dialogue which has consistently been seen as a strength of our gatherings.*

Major Theme of this Year's Conference - Strategies for Strengthening the Capacity of Electoral Commissions

Participants will be keenly aware of the widely acknowledged assessment that across the world, and in many different contexts, electoral democracy continues to face severe challenges, including threats to free and fair elections, the rights of minorities, freedom of the press, and the rule of law.

Against this background, none of the participants in our conference need reminding that institutions matter - none more so than strong, independent, effective and credible electoral commissions.

Our theme this year is therefore discussion of the practical strategies available to Commissioners to maintain and strengthen the capacity, competence and public credibility of the institutions they lead.

Wednesday 25 July

Participants from Electoral Commissions and associated bodies arrive in Cambridge.

7.30 p.m. Informal dinner in the Restaurant, The Møller Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge for participants staying at the Centre.

Thursday 26 July: Day One

9.45 a.m. Participants convene in the Study Centre Suite 2, The Møller Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge (*tea and coffee will be served*)

10.00 a.m. ***Welcome, introductions and apologies for absence***

10.15 a.m. ***Session I (i) - Reflections on Recent Elections***

In our first session, we will hear from some participants about their recent first-hand experience of managing and/or preparing for significant elections, with an opportunity for general discussion of the issues raised.

11.15 a.m. ***Break***

11.30 a.m. ***Session I (ii) - Reflections on Recent Elections***

Discussions continued

12.30 a.m. ***Lunch in the Old Kitchen, Trinity College***

2.00 p.m. ***Session II (i) - Strategies for Strengthening the Capacity of Electoral Commissions***

Participants know how a strong, effective and credible electoral commission is critical to the democratic health of a country. Commissioners have a key role in ensuring that the Commissions they lead maintain and strengthen their ability to oversee credible elections whose results command widespread acceptance.

Throughout Session II, participants will be invited to share their experience and insights in this area, drawing on the steps that they have personally taken in carrying out their duties. Among the areas we might usefully consider are:

- clarity about the respective roles and responsibilities of both Commissioners and staff; and building strong and effective working relationships within the Commission;
- setting the core values of their Commission – the key aspects that make the Commission stand out;
- the opportunity for a Chairperson to set a few key priorities for their Commission to achieve – which might include, for example: voter registration; voter education; improving participation (whether across the board or among particular under-represented groups); the introduction of technology; reform of electoral legislation and/or systems; tackling election fraud or ‘money-power’ in campaigning; and so on;

- ensuring that Commissioners and staff (both permanent and temporary) are well-trained and equipped to carry out their roles; and that the Commission secures adequate resources to deliver on its tasks;
- identifying the high-level risks involved in managing a successful and credible electoral process, and leading the Commission's response to managing these risks – including the unexpected crises that inevitably arise during the course of most electoral cycles;
- being the 'public face' of the Commission and building strong relationships with a wide range of those interested in the democratic electoral process - from politicians, to citizen rights' groups, to international donors;
- establishing and strengthening the Commission's reputation and credibility, especially in the face of difficulties and deep political divisions.

Our conference has always emphasised that there is no "one-size-fits-all" template of strategies to strengthen the capacity of Commissions. Invariably, the political, legal, historical and cultural context in which a commission is initially created and now operates shapes what can and should be done. We look forward to hearing a range of perspectives, while also expecting, from past experience, that participants will identify some common issues and principles which apply in most, or even all, of our jurisdictions.

3.15 p.m.	<i>Break</i>
3.30 p.m.	<i>Session II (ii) - Strategies for Strengthening the Capacity of Electoral Commissions</i>
	Discussions continued
5.00 p.m.	<i>Close</i>
6.45 p.m.	Participants leave The Møller Centre (convene in the Wegner Lounge) for Trinity College, to travel to the Conference Dinner
7.00 p.m.	Pre-dinner reception in the Cloisters, Trinity College
7.45 p.m.	Conference Dinner in the Hall, Trinity College

Friday 27 July: Day Two

- 9.45 a.m. Participants convene in the Study Centre Suite 2, The Møller Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge (*tea and coffee will be served*)
- 10.00 a.m. ***Session III (i) - Strategies for Strengthening the Capacity of Electoral Commissions***
- Discussions continued
- 11.00 a.m. *Break*
- 11.15 a.m. ***Session III (ii) - Strategies for Strengthening the Capacity of Electoral Commissions***
- Discussions continued
- 12.30 p.m. *Lunch in the Old Kitchen, Trinity College*
- 2.00 p.m. ***Session III (iii) - Strategies for Strengthening the Capacity of Electoral Commissions***
- Discussions continued
- 3.00 pm *Break*
- 3.30 p.m. ***Session IV (i) – Other Important Developments***
- This session will briefly discuss a number of modest proposals for enhancing the ongoing good work of the Conference, including:
- establishing a website where relevant and useful information discussed at conferences and informal workshops can be shared, but keeping in mind always that the anonymity of contributions must be preserved;
 - conducting a second informal workshop for African electoral commissioners after the success of the first held in Mauritius in November 2017, and continuing with the informal workshop of electoral commissions from the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation states;
 - potential collaboration with other institutions where it is believed there are mutual and complementary benefits.
- 4.30 p.m. *Concluding remarks and the way forward*
- 5.00 p.m. *Close*
- 5.00 p.m. ***Optional Session: Engaging Citizens as Monitors of Electoral Integrity***
- For interested participants, Mr Fredrik Galtung (founder of a new tech start up and, until recently, President Founder of Integrity Action) will provide a brief explanation of innovative approaches to engaging citizens as active monitors of electoral integrity through key stages of the electoral process.*
- 5.30 p.m. *Close of optional session*
- 7.30 p.m. Reception in the Wegner Lounge, hosted by Dr Anil Seal, followed by an informal dinner in the Restaurant, The Møller Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge, for participants staying at the Centre.