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Dr M wants voter list cleaned to ensure fair elections

By FARIDAH BEGUM

SUBANG: The voter registration process and the management of the electoral roll must be reviewed to ensure future elections are held fairly, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said there were many components in the process of registering voters that were not proper.

"This was evident in the Lunas by-election when many voters, especially government supporters, could not vote because their names either did not appear in the electoral roll or were transferred," he told reporters after returning from Japan yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said this when asked to comment on an Election Court's declaration on Friday that the results of the Likas state seat in 1999 was null and void.

He added that the Government accepted the judgment and was making preparations for a by-election.

Asked about the failure of the Election Commission to act on the more than 4,000 protests and complaints about the electoral roll, Dr Mahathir said:

"We, the parties in the ruling coalition also make numerous complaints to the Election Commission. It is wrong to say that they

don't act."

"They investigate and often their replies are hard to accept. Even the Government is sometimes not satisfied and we question their answers and clarifications."

The Prime Minister added that he himself had been residing in Kuala Lumpur for the past 25 years but remained a registered voter in Titi Gajah in Alor Star, Kedah.

"No one questions this but there are instances of such irregularities. What about the many Kelantanese who reside in Kuala Lumpur but still have their names on the electoral roll back in Kelantan?"

"Why this happens, we are not told but maybe it is not intentional. No matter, we need to review the registration processes and the rights of a voter to vote in a certain place," he added.

Asked about the telephone call which Justice Muhammad Kamil Awang said he received directing him to strike off the petitions involving the Likas state seat without a hearing, Dr Mahathir said:

"Certainly, I did not give any directive. I don't know, maybe other people are giving the directive; people from other quarters are giving him the directive."

Asked if a "directive"

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meant it was someone more senior than Justice Muhammad Kamil, Dr Mahathir said judges more senior than the election judge could have given him the directive.

"I don't know. With judges it is difficult to say anything.

"If we were to say something, then they will say we interfere in the judiciary."

"So it is very difficult and sensitive. The judges are very concerned about their independence so much that sometimes they overstep certain boundaries too," he said when asked if an investigation would be called into the call.

Dr Mahathir said that in Malaysia the Government was made up of three institutions — one makes the laws (legisla-

ture), the second administers and enforces the law (executive) and the third interprets and decides on the workings of the law (judiciary).

"The duties are divided to ensure a check and balance is in place. But if the drafters want to become the judges and the administrators and the judges want to become the drafters, then I fear the administration of the country will be in a mess," he said.

In Petaling Jaya, the DAP urged Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to take immediate action against the person who called Justice Muhammad Kamil.

Its chairman Lim Kit Siang said Abdullah should raise the issue in Cabinet and come out with a strong statement against such actions and not dismiss them as trivial.