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`EC should do more than telling media to be fair'

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The Election Commission (EC) should initiate an independent inquiry into the conduct of the Anak Bukit and Pendang by-elections to ensure the electoral system is free from abuses of money, media and governmental machinery.

DAP chairman Lim Kit Siang said such an inquiry should include the participation of representatives from the Malaysian Human Rights Council (Suhakam) and non-governmental organisations.

"DAP shares the concern of the EC with the reports of rampant dirty tactics and unethical practices in the two by-elections."

Lim said this reflected the EC's failure to develop an infrastructure that would ensure a free, fair and clean electoral system.

"Every time a by-election is held the EC would appeal to the mass media to be fair, but its responsibility must not end with such appeals, but include monitoring media coverage, publishing a report and "ticking off" mass media which had been blatantly unfair."

Lim said the tactics employed by both sides in the by-elections which included posters demeaning Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his Deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi must be condemned by Malaysians.

He also said although these tricks existed, the source of those posters were unproven as in the case where a poster condemning the late Pas president Datuk Fadzil Noor was claimed to have been the work of Pas supporters.

On Tuesday Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib said Pas had printed posters condemning Fadzil and blamed them on Barisan Nasional, in an attempt to smear BN.

Umno and Pas are locked in straight fights in the by-elections.