

20/11/2002

EC disappointed with Opposition's attitude

ALOR STAR, Tues. - The Election Commission is disappointed that opposition parties which criticised it for unfair redelineation of election boundaries failed to turn up when invited to air their grievances.

Commission secretary Datuk Wan Ahmad Wan Omar said there had been poor response to the nationwide hearings which the commission was conducting to listen to protests and suggestions on the redelineation exercise.

All of the local opposition leaders invited for the hearing at Tunjang this morning failed to turn up, said Wan Ahmad.

The leaders had been notified in advance by registered mail.

The EC began a fourday hearing in Kedah on Sunday.

Wan Ahmad said the attitude of the Opposition was disappointing when the Federal Constitution guaranteed all parties with grievances a fair hearing by the commission.

"They are not only irresponsible, but disrespect the laws and the commission," he said at a Press conference here today.

"They only know how to criticise us behind our backs but don't turn up when we, the full lineup of the commission, come to their area to listen to them."

Wan Ahmad said State Governments, political parties, elected representatives and local government were allowed to present their protests or suggestions regarding the redelineation.

With the exception of State Governments, each complaint lodged needed the support of at least 100 voters' signatures.

The commission would then set up a hearing in the area to listen to the representations.

Wan Ahmad said that of the 71 cases lodged in Kedah, 26 were from the Barisan Nasional State Government.

Individuals, nearly all of whom represent opposition parties, submitted an additional 45 appeals and protests.

The commission has so far heard 12 of the 45 cases presented by the Opposition in Kedah.

Wan Ahmad said most of them were related to protests about the shift in voting districts.

The commission will hear the 26 cases presented by the BN State Government on Dec 2, most of which relate to protests regarding the proposed renaming of several State Assembly constituencies.

Once the hearings are completed in all States, the redelineation map would be amended to accommodate protests and suggestions.

The commission will display the amended map in early January, before presenting a report to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Wan Ahmad said the redelineation map would then be tabled at the first Dewan Rakyat session next year.

Of the complaints, Wan Ahmad said most were from Kelantan (84) followed by Sabah (78) and Kedah (71).

The commission is also proposing 25 new parliamentary seats and 59 State Assembly seats nationwide.