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Enforce law on address registration to weed out phantom voters

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The National Registration Act 1959 (Act 78) and Regulations 1990 must be strictly enforced if the Election Commission is to successfully implement its ruling that voters can only vote at constituencies according to addresses on their identity cards.

However, the New Straits Times learnt that Section 15(1) of the Act has never been strictly enforced.

Section 15(1) stipulates that any person registered under these Regulations who changes his place of residence to a place where he may reside for a period of 90 days or more shall report such change and shall apply for a replacement identity card.

Deputy Home Minister Datuk Zainal Abidin Zin when contacted confirmed that many Malaysians do not change their addresses when they move out of their hometowns.

"Many move out to other States, cities and towns to do their businesses or work. They normally return home for festivals and to cast their votes during general elections and by-elections," he added.

He said if a voter wants to permanently settle down and exercise his voting rights in that particular constituency then he must inform the NRD so that change of address could be made to his identity card and Election Commission on the change of polling centre.

With the new ruling, Zainal said, a voter can vote only in the constituency according to his identity card.

"I hope the EC will sort out this issue with the NRD. If the EC seeks our help then we will render our assistance," he added.

He said the Home Ministry was viewing the issue closely as the move was also to weed out the problem of illegal shifting of voters.

On Friday, Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that Umno wanted the voting list in all the parliamentary and State constituencies reviewed as the existing one failed to reflect the actual composition of voters.

Dr Mahathir had said the EC should take immediate measures to address the "scam" as the voters list in the country had been rigged to accommodate phantom voters.

He was referring to the recent Anak Bukit and Pendang by-elections.

Zainal said Malaysians must co-operate with the Government if they want to weed out this problem.

EC chairman Datuk Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman was quoted as saying yesterday that to solve the problem of phantom voters, the new ruling must be strictly implemented.

Previously, those registered to vote in a particular constituency can do so even if they resided elsewhere.