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We have evidence of 'imported' voters in Kedah, says State BN

ALOR STAR, Wed. - Kedah Barisan Nasional has evidence of "imported" voters being registered in the State and is gathering more information from the other Malay majority constituencies besides Anak Bukit, its secretary, Datuk Ahmad Lebai Sudin, said.

He said Umno branch heads in the State had been directed to help check the voter registration list in their areas.

Asked why the party did not object to the presence of "imported" voters in Kedah when the electoral roll was put up for display by the Election Commission, Ahmad admitted that Umno had overlooked the matter.

"We only realised how serious it was after the by-elections in Anak Bukit and Pendang."

Asked how the party planned to solve the problem, he said the State BN hoped to get the co-operation of the National Registration Department to vet the voters' list.

He said once this was done, the party would have stronger proof that Pas had a systematic plan of shifting voters to manipulate the election process and gain control of the State.

"We hope to do this before the next general election," he said.

Meanwhile, State Pas Commissioner Azizan Abdul Razak reiterated that the party had nothing to do with the voter registration exercise and had never brought in phantom voters or "imported" voters.

He said the party left it to the EC to handle the issue, but Pas was willing to work with the commission to get to the bottom of the matter.

Yesterday, EC chairman Datuk Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman said the commission would clean up the roll of all "imported and phantom voters" within three months with the co-operation of political parties, the police, National Registration Department and the public.

He said most of the imported voters were alleged to be listed in Kelantan, Terengganu and Kedah with some in Pahang.

But he said that these imported voters were genuine voters whose polling centres have been moved by political parties to other constituencies during general elections and by-elections.

Rashid also said political parties would no longer be allowed to submit names for registration in the electoral roll to overcome this problem.

In Kuantan, Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob said Pahang Umno has proof that the Opposition had attempted to register its supporters from Kelantan and Terengganu as voters in the State.

Adnan, who is State Umno liaison chief, also said that the party had concrete evidence of the Opposition's action plan.

He said the evidence was now in the hands of Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the Umno management committee.

Speaking after chairing the State Executive Council meeting, he also urged the Election Commission to investigate reports that some of its staff members were not being impartial in their duties.

He also urged the EC to conduct its own investigations on staff who may be biased in conducting their duties.

Adnan, who is also State Barisan Nasional chairman, said an 11-member team set up by Umno Pahang had been monitoring the electoral roll for more than a month.

Initially, it was set up to check unregistered voters among Umno

members.

"However, along the way, we found evidence of imported voters being brought in... many of them were from Kelantan and Terengganu."

Adnan believed that the Opposition started "importing" voters after the 1999 general election.

He welcomed the EC's latest efforts to clean up the roll of all imported and phantom voters, including the new rulings for voter registration.

This included not allowing political parties to submit names for registration on behalf of the voters.

In Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang said Pas had proof of the existence of "imported" voters in certain constituencies where the Opposition was stronger than the BN.

Hadi, who is Pas acting president, said the existence of such voters had even been detected in his Marang parliamentary constituency in the previous general election.

He said "imported" voters and the problem of overlapping identity card numbers in the electoral roll arose regularly and became obvious during elections, especially in Pas strong-holds.

He said Pas had strong evidence to show that factory workers from Pekan in Pahang and Indians from Johor and Selangor were brought to Marang to vote in the 1986 and 1990 general elections.

"The presence of non-Malays such as Bangladeshis, Indians and Myanmars were even detected in my Marang constituency, where the majority of voters are Malays.

"Such approach is used by the BN in areas it thinks it will lose," he said after chairing the State Executive Council meeting.

Hadi said a study conducted by the Pas election unit showed that the practice could be associated with the BN.

"Any allegation that Pas was responsible in 'importing' voters is wrong," he said.

Asked if any formal report had been lodged to the EC, Hadi said Pas had already raised the matter with the commission a few times.

He added that Pas election victories did not depend on "imported voters" as the party won through a clean approach.

Meanwhile, Kelantan Umno liaison committee deputy chairman Datuk Idris Jusoh said the party was aware of the presence of imported voters in the State.

"We have asked all the eight Umno divisions in the State to prepare a detailed report on the imported voters so that we can take action."

However, Idris declined to identify the constituencies where Umno believed that "imported" voters exist.

Idris said the State Umno has also compiled a list of names which were reported missing from the electoral list to be submitted to the EC.

In Kota Baru, Kelantan Umno information chief Datuk Ismail Mamat welcomed the decision by the EC not to allow political parties to submit names for registration.

He said it could help to prevent "phantom" or "imported" voters especially from other States.

"If each voter went personally to register, they can prevent their names from being 'misused' for personal gain," he said.

Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat and his deputy Datuk Abdul Halim Abdul Rahman were not available for comment.

Meanwhile, Kelantan election officer Zulkefli Kamaruzzaman said would-be voters must come personally to the State EC office or its registration centres in post offices and shopping centres to register themselves.

This, he added, followed the EC's decision not to allow political parties to submit names for registration to overcome the problem of

"imported" voters.