

BN candidate accused of buying votes
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Liou Chen Kuang, DAP's candidate for the Machap state seat by-election, has accused his opponent of being involved in money politics in the run up to the polls on April 12.

Liou (left) said his rival, Barisan Nasional's Lai Meng Chong, was misusing government machinery and funds to canvas for votes in Machap.

Liou also lodged a formal complaint to the Election Commission (EC), stating that Lai had breached the election laws by offering bribe to the voters.

His accusations against Lai stemmed from a report in the Sin Chew Daily yesterday that Lai had promised allocations between RM6,000 and RM13,000 for five families for housing repairs.

MCA's election machinery head Peng Fei Xun and Malacca Chief Minister's special officers known only as Mahadevan and Shahril were also with Lai in that campaigning round.

"It is clear that Lai had misused government funds and state machinery for his party and his own gain. This is an act of bribing the voters," said Liou in a statement today.

According to the Section 10(a) of the Election Offences Act 1954, it is an offence amounting to bribery to give, lend, offer or promise any money or valuable consideration to any elector or voter.

No authority

The punishment includes imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year and a fine not exceeding RM2000.

The offender will also be incapable of being elected at any election or if at that date he has been elected at any election, his seat shall be vacated from the date of such conviction.

Liou said Machap-born Lai had no authority to use government funds and machinery even if he is the political secretary to Human Resource Minister Dr Fong Chan Onn.

"Also, state officers that went with Lai on his rounds have no authority to promise such allocations," Liou, a 33-year-old businessman, asserted.

He added that every candidate must compete fairly regardless of the parties that they represent in elections without abusing the government machinery and funds.

"I urge the EC to take legal action against Lai and those involved to ensure the fairness and cleanliness of the coming by-election," he stated.

Desperate tactic

Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak however dismissed the DAP accusation, claiming it

to be a desperate tactic by the opposition party.

Najib, who is also the BN deputy chairperson, said DAP had run out of issues.

"They're groping hard for issues that they could even make such an accusation against our candidate.

"As a candidate, he (Lai) has no power but when they (Machap Baru residents) have problems like they need housing meant for the poor, he would get the forms and submit them to the chief minister for consideration. This is not against the law," Bernama quoted Najib as saying.

'Quit your government post'

Meanwhile DAP Malacca chief Goh Leong San said Lai, 56, should resign from his political secretary post while contesting for the by-election.

"To ensure a level playing field for the upcoming Machap by-election, Lai should relinquish his taxpayer-funded position as political secretary to the Human Resources Minister," Goh's statement read.

According to the Annual List of Federal Positions 2007, Lai's position in the government is paid a monthly salary of RM7,187.40. An official car and a driver is also provided to Lai.

"It is a third more than the monthly allowance for a Malacca state assemblyman," Goh pointed out.

"Lai should resign from his current position or at least seek leave without pay and openly vow not to use his official car, driver, taxpayer-funded patrol and other perks during the by-election," Goh added.

The two candidates will be campaigning until April 11 and the by-election will be held the next day.

Machap has 9,623 registered voters, including 108 postal voters. The Chinese account for 45 percent of the voters, Malays 38 percent, Indians 15 percent and others two percent.

The seat fell vacant following the death of BN assemblyperson Poh Ah Tiam, 55, on March 15.

Liou was the losing candidate in this Chinese-majority state seat in the 2004 general election when the popular Poh garnered a 4,562-vote majority to retain the seat for the third time.

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