

Mafrel: BN's election goodies 'unlawful'
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While it's goodies galore from Barisan Nasional towards the Machap electorate, the law defines such acts as 'bribery', warns an election watchdog.

Deputy Premier Najib Abdul Razak yesterday pledged a brand new RM200,000 multi-purpose hall and another RM540,000 for three Felda schemes in the area.

BN candidate Lai Chong Meng on the other hand have pledged between RM6,000 and RM13,000 for house repairs.

According to Malaysian for Free and Fair Elections (Mafrel) head Abd Malek Hussin, such pledges are illegal according to Section 10 of the Election Offences Act 1954 for bribery.

According to the law, it is an offence amounting to bribery to give, lend, offer or promise any money of valuable consideration to any elector or voter.

Punishment includes imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year and a fine not exceeding RM2,000.

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.

"The law states that not just act of giving (goodies during election time), but even a promise of such things is already wrong," said Abd Malek.

Nomination form poser

He was commenting on a complaint by DAP candidate Liou Chen Kuang who yesterday filed a complaint with the state Election Commission over the house repair allocations made by his opponent.

"When Najib announced the allocation for Felda, he is using public funds for political purposes and to support his party's candidate," said Abd Malek.

On another note, Abd Malek (left) said during Mafrel's observation of nomination process, it was observed that Lai specified his occupation as 'Tiada (nil)' on the nomination form.

"Mafrel's contention that Lai is lying about his job on the nomination papers. He is a member of the administration specified under Article 160 (b) of the Federal Constitution," he said, adding that Mafrel, as an observer, was in no position to raise objections during nomination process.

Lai, 56, is the political secretary to Human Resource Minister Fong Chan Onn.

Yesterday, DAP Malacca chief Goh Leong San said Lai should relinquish his public-funded position while contesting the by-election.

He noted that official documents state that Lai was paid RM7,187.40 monthly and has an official car and driver.

Goh called on Lai to at least seek leave without pay during the campaign period and openly vow not to use any of the perks provided by the government.

Polling is on April 12.

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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