

KJ: 42,000 voters in roll 'anomalies', not 'fraud'

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Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin views the 42,000-odd questionable cases on the electoral roll as "anomalies", rather than "fraud".

NONEspeaking at a debate with Bersih chairperson Ambiga Sreenevasan in Petaling Jaya last night, Khairy said the Election Commission has "acceptable explanations" for the irregularities.

As such, by telling the people that the questionable names were a fraudulent move, Bersih was "misrepresenting" the issue and "pre-empting reform efforts" in order to get people on the streets, he said.

"Ambiga says it is fraudulent and the EC must use its power to strike these people out (of the electoral roll) and this is the reason for going out on Saturday...

"In the three months (of public display) 1,248 cases came forward, 55 percent are still alive and they say, hang on, I'm still here," he said, giving three examples of voters aged 97 and 98.

NONEHe claimed that their "only crime" was not to update their identity cards with the MyKad and if the EC had done what Bersih had wanted, it would have denied these 700-plus people their constitutional right to vote.

Another 55 percent of the 1,248 cases were found to be dead and their next-of-kin did not register their deaths with the EC.

Saying later that he "is not an EC mouthpiece", Khairy added that he was confident that the EC's excuses for the "anomalies" were "legitimate".

"It is a perfectly legitimate reason for an anomaly. Out of the 40,000-plus left, can you tell me with absolutely certainty that it's all fraud?" he asked the audience of at least 600 people at the event organised by The Malay Mail.

'Lame excuses given by EC'

In response, Ambiga said election regulations allow the EC to strike suspect voters off the roll "without violating the constitution".

"The fraud lies with the lame excuses of the EC, saying it can't do anything. It uses (the regulations) to register phantom voters and foreigners and as for removing others (off the list), the EC is coy and hesitant about it.

"I disagree that the EC can't do it. Have you read about people who have voted and now cannot as they're no longer on the roll, or people overseas who never registered and are listed as voters?" Ambiga asked.

NONEShe also contended that the very fact that the parliamentary select committee for electoral reform recommended a royal commission of inquiry on the Sabah electoral roll suggested that fraud had taken place.

"Look at the Likas case...which was due to phantom voters. And after that an amendment was passed to disallow anyone to query the electoral roll.

"There is now no independent arbiter. We are at the mercy of the EC. It's like make Nero the fire chief," she said referring to the re-election in Likas which was called after the court annulled the result due to rigging.

A lawyer by profession, Ambiga also reminded Khairy that even in legal practice, "if you can't serve (a legal notice) you go for substituted service".

"You can't go on for 30 years. You give notice and if they fail to respond after a period you exercise (the right to strike them off)... (The EC) is giving excuses when these regulations were made by them to make their lives easier," Ambiga said.

However, Khairy, who refused to put a time-frame as to when a suspicious voter can be fairly accepted as being either deceased or registered fraudulently, said the right to vote is not the same as a bankruptcy matter.

"A certain discretion needs to be applied," he said.

'Double registration'

Responding to Ambiga's assertion that not 42,000 but 3.1 million cases in the electoral roll were suspicious, Khairy again defended the EC by giving the commission's side of the story.

Among these were political scientist Ong Kian Ming's finding of new armed forces postal voters above the recruitment age.

Explaining this, Khairy said these people were in fact registered twice, as they did not inform the EC that they were registered as voters before joining the armed forces.

"The burden of proof is (on the voter), who must inform the EC, and this is to protect the voters' constitutional right." he said.

While both sides received strong backing from different parts of the floor, Khairy's supporters heckled the Bersih chairperson a number of times.

They also chanted "We love KJ!" after the debate, obviously taken in by the Rembau MP's posturing.

However, most of the questions from the floor came from the side of the room that seemed to support Bersih.

