

## **EC: Candidates' laxness major cause of polls offences**

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**By Hazlan Zakaria**

The Election Commission blamed laxness on the part of election candidates and their agents, as the major cause of most election offences.

"Information does not get down to party workers. When they are confronted after committing an offence, they say they were not briefed," its deputy chief Wan Ahmad Wan Omar said.

Speaking at a briefing for the media and peninsula-based political parties, he said that many candidates and their agents do not attend election meetings and failed to channel information to their party workers.

The meetings, he argued, are essential as it is here that the election rules are explained, information provided and decisions are made about the conduct of the polls.

It is also there that the OCPD will explain security matters to all involved.

Wan Ahmad also lamented that when they do not turn up, agents are not officially declared at the meeting and this creates trouble when they need to enter restricted areas and deal with officials.

He urged all candidates and agents to attend election meetings and also proactively distribute all information and decisions to their party workers to ensure elections run smoothly.

Wan Ahmad said the same is true of the current updated electoral roll given to candidates.

He added that many cases of problems with the electoral roll and verification of voters happen when party workers use outdated lists and not the updated one sent out.

It is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that their party workers have the latest list, he said.

On the matter of local polls observers, Wan Ahmad stressed that those on duty as observers must remember to be neutral, professional and impartial and keep partisan feelings private.

The deputy EC chief also announced that from now, winning candidates shall no longer be allowed to speak after being proclaimed by the returning officer as the counting hall is neutral ground administered by the commission.

Today's briefing, Wan Ahmad explained, is part of a nationwide exercise by the EC to educate political parties and the media on current polls procedures.

He said that state election directors will soon hold similar briefings regularly in their states up until the election is announced.

The briefing was concluded with a simulation exercise to depict how indelible ink is going to be used and how polling will be run inside polling centres with the new rules.

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