

Ink used on voter's index finger is NOT indelible

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By Koh Jun Lin

Barely hours after 'indelible' ink was used for the first time in Malaysia, complaints have emerged that the ink is in fact removable.

This is contrary to the Election Commission's (EC) assurance that traces of the ink would last at least seven days on the finger after being painted on with a brush.

One soldier, who had marked his ballot in advance voting this morning, said he had removed most of the ink with water alone - just six hours later.

NONE"Only 30 percent is left, and I haven't even used soap yet.

"The standard is like stamp (ink) pads, which is not very strong.

"On the nail, it is 100 percent gone. It is a little difficult to remove from the seams.

"On the skin, I think it would be gone with rigorous washing with soap," the soldier, who did not wish to be named, said in a text-message.

PKR vice-president Tian Chua said some 20 security personnel had approached him to demonstrate how the ink could be "entirely" removed with hand sanitiser gel.

"This is very disappointing," Tian Chua told Malaysiakini when contacted, adding that he had lodged a report at 2pm today at the Taman Koperasi Polis police station, Batu Caves.

"Even the police officer (receiving the report) herself had already washed it off," he said.

Chua also called for EC chief Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof's resignation.

NONEAnother PKR vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar tweeted that she had made a similar police report in Sentul after a military personnel showed how the ink could be removed with Dettol (a disinfectant brand) or hand sanitisers.

Asked by a Twitter follower how she knew that the claim was authentic, she replied, "Because the ink was slowly removed in front of us and the press."

Photographs of index fingers stained with ink, matching the colour used in the advance voting today, have also been circulated on Facebook.

These show the ink in various stages of being removed. The captions state that thinner that is used to remove paint stains is an effective 'indelible' ink remover, while others claimed that soap works just as well.

In some images posted on the Internet, ink stains could still be seen on the edges of the fingernail after attempts to clean it off.

EC chief: Let the police investigate

Malaysiakini received a call from a person claiming to be a police personnel, who said the ink could be removed with thinner, but this could not be independently verified.

NONEWhen contacted for comment, Abdul Aziz (left) said via text-message:

"If that is the case, let the police investigate whether this is true, since they have already lodged police reports."

"According to testing by the EC, it cannot be removed (with soap, thinner or hand sanitiser) and can still be detected," he added in another message.

The use of the ink is among the demands made by Bersih, the coalition for clean and fair elections.

This was subsequently taken up by the parliamentary select committee on electoral reform as a move to deter 'phantom voters' from voting several times under a false identity.

Meanwhile, independent election observer Pemantau told a press conference today that their observers have reported three cases of voters being able to remove the ink.

One case has been reported in Sibul, one in Kelantan, and the other in the Batu parliamentary seat in Kuala Lumpur.

Replace the ink if necessary

Pemantau urged the EC to explain the situation as soon as possible and even replace the ink if necessary ahead of polling day on May 5.

Bersih steering committee member Maria Chin Abdullah Pemantau's steering committee member Maria Chin Abdullah (right) said that the latest development "tantamounts to cheating" as the ink was supposed to prevent double voting.

She said that the EC should hold a public demonstration on the indelible ink as well to explain the usage of indelible ink before polling day.

Maria said that a police report has been lodged in Batu over the ink and the matter has been communicated to the EC by incumbent Batu MP Tian Chua.

"But the EC chairperson wants us to write an official letter. There's no time for this kind of bureaucracy," she said.

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