

'40,000 Bangladeshi voters in GE13? That's absurd!'

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The Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur has refuted claims that 40,000 of its nationals had been flown in to vote in the 13th general election on May 5.

High Commissioner AKM Atiqur Rahman described the claim as "absurd" and that it put the half-a-million Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia at risk of abuse.

He said it would have been logistically impossible to fly in that many Bangladeshis within a week, via Biman Bangladesh, Malaysia Airlines or any other airline.

"The propaganda of Bangladeshi citizens voting in the 13th general election, I am sure, is nothing but mere fabrication by some interest groups, and a sheer misrepresentation of facts," Atikur told reporters today.

NONEHe said checks with the Malaysian High Commission in Dhaka and the KL International Airport officers would also show that it is impossible for 40,000 visas and sufficient flights for the purpose.

Atiqur (left) said the images of man-handling and abuse of "so-called phantom voters" accused of being Bangladeshis were "disturbing".

He stressed that such "xenophobic propaganda" should be stopped.

Atiqur added that the high commission knew of no Bangladeshi who had been given Malaysian identity cards so that they could vote.

He noted that the only people of Bangladeshi origin who voted, would likely be the "100-plus" people who had once been Bangladeshi and were now naturalised Malaysian citizens after living here for decades.

"There are even Bengali families who have been here for more than 100 years and are in their third generation. Do you not consider them Malaysian?" he asked.

'Opposition leaders did not approach us'

Atiqur also said that the opposition leaders who made the claims of phantom voters have also not approached the high commission for clarification.

Videos and photographs of phantom voters who were alleged to be of Bangladeshi origin have been circulating since the May 5 polls.

NONE In one incident, a busload of foreign workers, believed to be Bangladeshis, were pulled off the bus and beaten up upon suspicion that they were on their way to vote.

Whistleblower website Sarawak Report also highlighted that an Umno blogger had tweeted accolades to Bangladesh and its national carrier for BN's win in the polls.

Meanwhile, Atiqur proposed that the Malaysian government should act against groups he accused of holding meetings in Malaysia to urge youths to go against the Bangladeshi government, in aid of alleged Bangladeshi war criminals.

These alleged criminals, he said, are on trial for the 1971 War of Liberation during the formation of Bangladesh, and were supposedly involved in rape, abduction and murder.

Three have been sentenced to death, while another was imprisoned.

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