

## **Minister defends secrecy over ink supplier**

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**By Ram Anand**

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Shahidan Kassim told the Dewan Rakyat that the identity of the indelible ink supplier for the general election must be kept secret to prevent "fights and chaos".

This was raised during his winding-up speech for the Prime Minister's Department on the debate on the Royal Address yesterday.

NONEThe minister claimed that people would "queue up" to buy the ink from the supplier to mark themselves prior to voting in order to disrupt the electoral process.

"If we disclose, they will all queue up and buy the ink, and then dip their fingers in it. They will then queue up at the polling centre and say, I have ink, I don't need to produce my identification card.

"Even me as minister, I wouldn't want to know what colour the ink is prior to voting," he said.

On the choice of the colour of the ink that was used during the 13th general election, Shahidan said that it was a secret known only to the Election Commission (EC).

'Ink was indelible'

He also defended the durability of the ink, claiming that the stain on his finger had lasted until the day he was sworn in as a minister, which was May 16, or 11 days after polling.

"I washed the ink at night but it was still there. I needed to scrape the skin with a knife, only then did it come off," he said.

"I even regretted applying the ink because I tried all methods to remove it and it did not go away."

Shahidan stressed that the indelible ink was the only solution to prevent electoral fraud, and that the MyKad was more important than the ink in identifying voters.

The use of indelible ink for elections is popular in Third World countries as a means

to prevent a voter from casting his or her ballot multiple times.

It was to be used for the 2008 general election following pressure by polls reform coalition Bersih to prevent double or triple voting by the same individual.

However, the move was canceled at the eleventh hour but it was eventually enforced during the 13th general election, only to find that the ink wasn't as indelible as touted.

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