

## **Indelible ink - who can we trust now?**

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COMMENT The indelible ink fiasco has made a mockery of the 13th general election.

The Election Commission's (EC) top two officials have time and again misled the people by making statements about indelible ink that even they cannot substantiate.

As custodians of the electoral process, the EC - instead of doing all it can to address the possibility of multiple voting - has taken the matter lightly.

For example, chairperson Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof has not been able to produce the Health Ministry letter that purportedly stated: 'Anything more than 1 percent silver nitrate could be carcinogenic or cause damage to the kidneys.'

The health minister has stated that there is no such letter.

Anyone daring to even sign such a letter is probably out of his mind, since silver nitrate at its purest form (99.99 percent purity) can even be purchased online. Silver nitrate solutions are used for titration in the laboratories for the determination of halides in a solution.

Now, Pakatan Rakyat has decided to take this matter to the court of justice and we wait eagerly to find out what went wrong. This is the best thing that can happen, since the attorney-general has decided that nothing would be done even after more than 1,000 police reports were lodged.

Pakatan has given the EC enough time to tell the truth on what caused the indelible ink to fail, thereby bringing the electoral process and GE13 results into dispute.

In my opinion, this is an act of malfeasance on the part of the EC, a constitutional body entrusted with the task of running a clean and fair election. In fact, by complicating the issue, the EC acted in a manner that is detrimental to the democratic process.

NONEThe reason why indelible ink was introduced for GE13 - and why it is used around the globe - is to prevent multiple voting, especially when the electoral roll is ridden with problems.

The EC made it possible for people to register as voters using various documents apart from the MyKad.

As a polling agent, I must admit that there is no way to stop someone from voting unless there are strong suspicions that the identity card is fake. We are not able to tell whether the same person has voted twice, unless the indelible ink used by advance voters lasts more than seven days.

A police personnel at my polling stream was supposed to have voted a week earlier, but when I asked him about the indelible ink on his finger, he said it was removed the same day.

What's the big secret?

PKR director of strategy Rafizi Ramli has given ample time for the EC to reveal the name of the supplier, but the government has cited "security issues" in keeping the name secret.

Now that GE13 is over, what 'secret' are we talking about? Frankly, I don't care a damn who you buy it from, as long as it is indelible.

- I want to know the name of the supplier and whether the company has a history of supplying indelible ink to other countries. In other words, is it a reputable supplier and does it have a track record? If not, why did the EC decide to buy from this particular supplier?

NONE- I want to know at what cost each bottle of the so-called indelible ink was purchased, compared to what is available in the market. This is because I think this fiasco smacks of criminal breach of trust, since it involved RM7 million of public funds.

- I want to know if the EC intends to sue the supplier of the ink that that did not meet expectations.

- I want to hear from the supplier as to what the silver nitrate content in the ink was, since controversy has arisen over statements by federal minister Shahidan Kassim and the EC officials.

NONE There are also contradictions between what Abdul Aziz and his deputy Wan Ahmad Wan Omar (right) have claimed - one said the amount of silver nitrate should not exceed one percent; the other said the content in the ink was in the range of 4-6 percent.

What the people want to see are relevant documents held by the EC, including the specifications of the ink. In bulk purchases, especially by a government agency, the supplier would have made available the specifications especially for imports. I dare the EC to publish these documents.

Abdul Aziz has denied having personal links with the supplier of the indelible ink, following Rafizi's claim in Parliament yesterday. I frankly do not see how Abdul Aziz can vouch for this on behalf of his deputy as well.

I find it hard to believe Abdul Aziz's statement. If it is true that the supplier is based in Singapore, why did the EC choose to buy from that company instead of sourcing the ink locally? There are many ink manufacturing plants in Malaysia that were among the leading investors in the 1980s.

If the EC is concerned that a local supplier would have leaked information, why not purchase the ink from established suppliers in China or India which have a good track record?

Finally, why did the exercise fail if the ink was indelible in the first place?

Both Abdul Aziz and Wan Ahmad have a lot to answer for.

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