

'RM19k per Kuala Besut voter' makes Bersih see red
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KUALA BESUT With less than 48 hours to go for the Kuala Besut by-election, Bersih has condemned the practice of vote buying, stating that it is to the tune of RM19,000 per voter.

"PAS has compiled from media reports up to Saturday that financial promises and allocations by federal and state agencies for the Kuala Besut area have totalled at least RM337 million.

azlan"The agencies involved include the Prime Minister's Department, Education Ministry, Agriculture Ministry, Terengganu state government and Syarikat Perumahan Negara Bhd (SPNB)," the watchdog said in a statement today.

Bersih said if divided among the 17,679 registered voters, it meant a vote in Kuala Besut is worth an unprecedented RM19,089.92 so far, provided that all the election pledges are fulfilled.

Bersih further questioned why marginalised communities must depend on promises during elections and by-elections to get the infrastructural development they are entitled to.

"The corrupt practice of vote-fishing by abusing public funds not only violates the level playing field in an election but also implies ad-hoc development planning driven by political expediency, and this is done at the expense of other constituencies," reads the statement.

Bersih called upon the Kuala Besut voters not to cast their ballots based on this since citizens are entitled to development funds as a right.

"Voters must also be warned that anyone committing an election offence of bribery or imposing undue influence or impersonation is liable to a jail term of up to two years and/or a fine of up to RM2,000 upon conviction," warned Bersih.

It called on voters in Kuala Besut and those working elsewhere to come back to vote to prevent phantom voters from impersonating them and voting on their behalf.

'EC closing one eye'

Meanwhile, DAP national organising secretary Anthony Loke slammed the Election Commission (EC) for "closing one eye" to allow such vote-buying to continue to happen.

Speaking in a press conference before visiting the Chinese voters at Kuala Besut today, he said that it's an "abuse of power" when the Umno leaders come to campaign in Kuala Besut in their capacity as cabinet ministers and allocate projects.

"These are abuse of power, but unfortunately, EC always has one eye closed, saying that the so-called programmes are under the ministries or the government department and they have no power to monitor the spending of the programmes," he said.

The Seremban MP added that under the Elections Act, the limit of expenditure for a state seat candidate cannot exceed RM100,000.

"However, just one programme done by a ministry, I think, is already over RM100,000," he added.

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