

EC not keen on proportional representation system

MalaysiaKini.com

Aug 25, 2013

By Nigel Aw

The current electoral system is better than the proportional system that is being bandied around as an alternative, said Election Commission deputy chief Wan Ahmad Wan Omar.

"I have studied the proportional system and there are many weaknesses. But for developing countries like Malaysia, to me, the current first-past-the-post (FPTP) system is very good.

"There were 71 countries in the world practising FPTP and only six of them have moved into the proportional system," he told a forum session at the 7th Annual Malaysian Student Leaders Summit in Kuala Lumpur today.

ec wan ahmad wan omar in kuala besutHe was responding to proposals to change the electoral system after BN managed to retain power despite only obtaining 47 percent of the popular vote compared to 51 percent by the opposition.

Wan Ahmad (right) added that the existing system is easier to understand and it has an MP accountable to a particular constituency.

He explained that under the proportional system, people vote for the party and the party will then select candidates according to its wishes.

"In the current system, if a representative does not perform, voters can throw them out in the next election," he said.

He added that if people insist on changing the electoral system, then a commission has to be formed to study the matter.

However, he said instances where a coalition loses the popular vote but wins the government does happen under this system, as in the UK and India.

NONEAlso present at the forum were Bersih co-chairperson Ambiga Sreenevasan and Lembah Pantai MP Nurul Izzah Anwar (right).

Ambiga acknowledged that there have been governments that have lost the popular vote but remain in power.

However she pointed out the case of Malaysia was particularly disproportionate.

"How did 51 percent of the votes translate to 89 seats (in Parliament) while nearly 48 percent of votes translate to 133 seats?" she said.

Adding on, Nurul added that even though the UK retained the FPTP system, it had taken several measures to improve its fairness.

"The UK had introduced laws to reduce the number of seats to adhere to the one person one vote value," she said.

She added that the UK had even introduced laws to ensure that the prime minister had no control over the election date.

The summit today was organised by the United Kingdom and Eire Council of Students (UKEC).

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