

Bersih not party polls guardians, Umno told
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Umno has been reminded that the Bersih coalition concerns itself with elections to public positions and do not monitor party elections.

"Bersih is not an overseer for all manner of elections - only those that affect the general public in terms of representation in government.

"That is our 'mandate'. As for the PKR elections, or any party and even NGO elections, it is an internal matter that must be addressed by the body's direct stakeholders - i.e. the members themselves," said Bersih's steering committee.

"Lest it be forgotten, Bersih 2.0 is set up to enhance democracy in the country by advocating for integrity in the process and system of electing the government.

"We are duty-bound to hold government and elected representatives responsible for their actions and use of public funds," it added.

The group headed by co-chairpersons Maria Chin Abdullah and Ahmad Farouk Musa were responding to Umno supreme council member Ibrahim Abu Shah's comments yesterday.

In the party website Umno Online, Ibrahim had said Bersih should comment on PKR's party elections before criticising the ruling party saying, "Bersih must cleanse itself of all the elements of cheating, bribery and injustice in the PKR elections before reprimanding others."

He was taking offence to Bersih's statement regarding the Terengganu crisis in which three BN state assemblypersons this week resigned from Umno, ending the coalition's state majority.

Bersih in return said Umno's reaction was not surprising, and were allegedly made to "deflect attention away from the Terengganu fiasco".

It reminded Ibrahim that Bersih was "only following up to seek the truth" on what former New Straits Times group chief editor Kadir Jasin had said of the crisis, that the reps would return to Umno if "the price is right".

Stressing it is Bersih's job to ensure accountability, it said, "Elected representatives are chosen by the people based on the content of their character and also their political affiliation.

"Any decision to change or distance themselves from their political affiliation which is one of the bases of their election, should only be exercised in very limited circumstances."

Opposition praised for restraint

Meanwhile Ikram Terengganu chief Zameran Jusoh ticked the three assemblypersons for being "immature" and for jeopardising the welfare of the people who had voted for them.

He also praised the opposition for not "cashing in" on the situation for their own political gains.

"We deeply admire the actions of various parties including the opposition who did not cash in (menanggung di air keruh) or take advantage of the political crisis that the ruling party suffered.

"This can avoid all kinds of side problems that can worsen the situation," said Zameran.

On Tuesday when BN was left with 14 seats to the opposition's 15, PAS said it would not do a Perak-style coup in Terengganu by trying to court the three renegade assemblypersons.

"What happened in Perak has taught us a lesson, we do not want to fall into the same hole twice," said PAS Terengganu chief commissioner Satiful Bahri Mamat then.

He was referring to BN's takeover of the Pakatan Perak government in 2008 after three state assemblypersons defected to become 'BN-friendly' Independents.