

**Gov't dismisses EC's poor integrity ranking**  
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PARLIAMENT The government has dismissed the Electoral Integrity Report 2015, in which Malaysia's Election Commission (EC) is ranked 114 out of 127 countries for electoral integrity as "a mere perception".

"Foreign bodies were free to conduct assessments and give their respective perceptions against the EC," Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Shahidan Kassim told Parliament today.

The truth is, he said, the commission is an entity under the prerogative of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to uphold the country's democracy and the government is satisfied with its capability.

The Electoral Integrity Report was prepared by three researchers from Harvard University and University of Sydney, with a total 49 indicators used in the research.

Shahidan (photo) said the report was prepared based on surveys done by electoral experts from each country, but the commission was in the dark about the Malaysian experts involved in the research.

He added that certain quarters have thrown various accusations and allegations against the commission to affect its integrity.

The minister was responding to a question from Sim Tze Tzin (PKR-Bayan Baru).

Shahidan also accused these quarters of taking advantage of the existing laws to fulfil their specific wishes.

According to the Electoral Integrity Project report, Malaysia's ranking was dragged down by issues of malapportionment where electoral boundaries were drawn to favour BN.

One of the researchers, Max Gromping, who is attached with University of Sydney, noted: "In particular, rural constituencies – traditionally strongholds of the ruling party – are advantaged compared to urban ones".

The ranking placed Malaysia in the category of countries with "low electoral integrity" together with countries like Angola, Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, and Egypt.

It trails far behind neighbour Indonesia, which ranks 51st for its presidential elections. The Philippines and Thailand rank 91st and 88th place respectively.