

## **142 missing ballot papers: What happened?**

**Malaysiakini.com**

**Apr 30, 2007**

**Beh Lih Yi**

The Ijok by-election is over but there is a long list of questions waiting for answers from the Election Commission (EC).

Top on the list is the mystery behind 142 unreturned ballot papers at one of the five voting groups in the Pekan Berjantai Bestari Utara polling district.

This amounts to nearly 30 percent of the total 500 ballot papers issued in the fourth voting group in Pekan Berjantai Bestari Utara.

Voters in each polling districts are categorised according to their age in different groups, called voting streams. Generally, older groups are in voting streams 1, 2 and 3 while the younger ones are in 4 and 5.

All ballot papers in other polling districts were accounted for except for Jaya Setia, where one ballot paper in the first voting stream was not returned.

Parti Keadilan Rakyat vice-president R Sivarasa described the missing ballot papers as a "strange, unusual and mysterious" occurrence.

"The high number of 142 is unacceptable. Surely there is something fundamentally wrong and it warrants a probe by EC," he said when contacted today.

### **Money offered?**

According to him, the single unreturned ballot in Jaya Setia could be an isolated incident but not the rest.

"Since it is the first voting stream, (the reason) can be quite easily understood as an elderly voter may have dropped the ballot paper.

"But 142 unreturned ballot papers in another voting stream is just strange. The intention to take the ballot papers out without marking them suggests that money could have been offered for the ballot papers," he said.

In Saturday's by-election, PKR candidate Khalid Ibrahim lost to BN's K Parthiban by a 1,850 vote majority amid allegations of election irregularities and phantom voters.

The EC today warned that it is an offence for anyone to collect ballot papers but not cast their votes.

The 143 'missing' ballot papers are considered a record in the country's electoral history.

It said offenders could be charged under the Election Offences Act and face a jail term of up to two years or RM5,000 fine.

EC secretary Kamaruzaman Mohd Noor said the practice of not returning the ballot paper

occurred at every general election or by-election.

""The EC is unable to do anything. The booth to mark the ballot paper is a private place. If the voter keeps the ballot paper as a souvenir, there is nothing we can do," he told Bernama.

However, Sivarasa said the EC - an independent body tasked to organise elections in this country - cannot easily brush aside such a disturbing occurrence.

"EC officers are duty-bound to observe and ensure that voters place their ballot papers inside the ballot boxes but EC failed to do so," he added.

PKR said it will dispute the election results but will first gather all the necessary evidence.

### **Other irregularities**

Other alleged irregularities and discrepancies that have been recorded include:

#### **1) Discrepancy on the polling result in Pekan Ijok**

Before the official announcement that BN had won the by-election was made at 8.45pm, returning officer Haris Kasim read out the results from each voting stream.

According to him, PKR polled 135, 218 and 271 votes respectively in the three voting streams in Pekan Ijok while BN received 146, 206 and 253.

This led to PKR winning the Chinese-majority Pekan Ijok with 624 votes as opposed to BN which received 605 votes.

However, the election results distributed by EC to the media an hour later saw the votes received by PKR in the third voting stream in Pekan Ijok reduced by 40 - from 271 to 231. No explanation was given. [[Click here for the official results](#)]

Due to the change, PKR's votes were reduced to 584 and BN won Pekan Ijok.[\*]

#### **2) Ballot papers collected by unknown individuals**

Fifty-six-year-old voter Hiew Yoke Chau told malaysiakini that he was informed by BN and PKR polling agents that his ballot paper was collected by someone else when he came to vote at about 2pm in Pekan Ijok.

An EC officer finally allowed him to vote an hour later after he had signed a letter of oath declaring that he had not cast his ballot [[watch video below](#)].

According to PKR, there were two other similar cases in Pekan Ijok.

#### **3) Ballot paper for sale**

It has been suggested that there were attempts to 'buy' ballot papers. It allegedly starts with a voter sneaking out a ballot paper and giving it to an agent, who then marks the political party

of choice on the paper.

This marked paper is then given to another voter who will drop it in the marked ballot box and smuggled out his blank ballot paper. This will be given the agent. The process is repeated throughout the polling day.

The voters could allegedly collect money from the 'buyer' upon producing the unmarked ballot paper.

#### **4) Voters' names removed from electoral roll**

There were unconfirmed number of cases where voters had complained of their names having been removed from the electoral roll despite having voted in the same polling district previously and not changing their address.

Malaysiakini received six such complaints from Kampung Ijok, Simpang Ijok and Bukit Badong.

#### **5) Phantom voters**

PKR claimed that at least 'five confirmed dead people' had cast their votes on polling day. Apart from this, the opposition party also raised questions over 'suspicious looking' voters, such as a voter who looked like a Pakistani who cast his ballot in Kampung Ijok.

There were also similar cases in Jaya Setia.

PKR also stopped two buses ferrying some 80 passengers, mostly Malay women, on polling day after receiving information that the occupants allegedly possessed two identity cards and were phantom voters imported from elsewhere.

Umno Youth deputy chief Khairy Jamaluddin claimed that the group consisted of BN supporters from Perlis.

PKR also claimed that there were two other buses suspected of ferrying phantom voters.

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