

Missing ballots: Ijok not an isolated case
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An election expert has revealed that a shocking number of 8,176 ballots were unreturned in the Lumut parliamentary seat in Perak during the 1999 general election.

Wong Chin Huat who is a research fellow with Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's Institute of Malaysian and International Studies (Ikmas) sent malaysiakini the data he had tabled based on the Election Commission's report of previous general elections.

In 1999, BN's Kong Cho Ha defeated PKR's Zaman Huri Samsudin by 605-vote majority, but there were a whopping 8,176 unreturned ballots.

Considering the large number of unreturned ballots, Kong's win would be highly suspect because the win could have swayed to PKR.

Numbers for unreturned ballots in 2004 improved slightly compared to 1999 but the numbers of unreturned ballots still ran in the thousands.

Lumut consistently tops the chart in the four previous general elections including 5,486 ballots unaccounted for in 2004. (see chart below)

Unreturned ballots in Lumut						
Year	Total Ballot Unreturned (TBU)	BN	PKR	DAP	Majority	Majority - TBU
2004	5,486	27,415	15,801	-	11,614	6,128
1999	8,176	20,661	20,056	-	605	-7,571
1995	3,487	25,291	-	12,748	12,543	9,056
1990	2,763	22,161	-	17,287	4,874	2,111

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That year, Kong trumped PKR's Mustafa Kamil Ayub by a majority of 11,614.

However, by taking into account of the missing ballots, the majority would have been slashed to 6,128.

The issue of unreturned ballots surfaced during the Ijok by elections where there were 142 unreturned ballot papers in one of the five voting groups at Ijok's Pekan Berjuntai Bestari Utara polling district.

One in three not in

The number of missing ballots amounted to nearly 30 percent of the total of 500 ballot papers issued in the fourth voting group in Bestari Utara. Apparently, one in three voters had decided to take the ballot paper with them without casting it.

Wong who was asked to comment on this earlier exclaimed that this was not new and provided malaysiakini with the data he had collated.

"I focused on parliamentary seats from 1990 to 2004 and you could see the numbers are very high. The issue of unreturned ballots in Ijok is not new," he said.

He expressed concern over such alarming numbers which could have affected the outcome of the results.

"The EC has to explain themselves why there are so many missing ballots. The EC simply needs to update their records and the process in doing so must be transparent," he said.

"However, we must give EC the benefit of doubt, they could be innocent. This means they are simply incompetent.

"At best, the whole institution is corrupt from top to bottom. The EC has to clear its name and correct all irregularities to show people they are not part of the problem," he added.

Wong also said EC chair Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman once explained that the large number of unreturned ballots was due to navy officers being out on expeditions after having being sent their postal ballots.

"What kind of expedition requires 5,000 navy personnel to be sent all at once?" he asked.

Postal ballots are sent out five days after the nomination of the election candidate and these ballots must reach the managing officer by 5pm on polling day.

Unreturned ballots in 2004 general election

Parliamentary seat	Unreturned ballots	BN	PAS	PKR	DAP	Majority
Lumut	5,486	27,415	-	15,801	-	11,614
Dungun	1,598	26,398	21,502	-	-	4,896
Jerantut	1,427	21,349	12,892	-	-	8,457
Rasah	1,306	25,009	-	-	20,446	4,563
Gerik	1,098	12,621	4,224	-	-	8,397

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