

**EC 'helping' Umno to secure Penang**  
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The Election Commission (EC) has 'manipulated' the electoral delineation process to increase Malay-dominated state seats in Penang to enhance Umno's chances of taking over the state, claimed an opposition leader.

The unfair geo-political strategy is similar to the tactics deployed in Sabah in recent years and Malacca about three decades ago.

"Leadership changes, but not its dirty politics," said Penang DAP secretary Danny Law Heng Kiang.

Sabah and Malacca, which were once ruled by non-Malay chief ministers, are now firmly under Umno's grip.

Penang is the only state left in Malaysia without a Malay-Muslim chief minister. A Chinese chief minister has been ruling the state since independence.

According to Law, the present state seats – voter ratio between the Malay-dominated constituencies and non-Malay poll boundaries - indicate that things would change soon.

Although the Chinese, who make up about 59 percent of Penang's estimated population of 1.2 million, only 22 state seats or 55 percent are Chinese-majority constituencies.

The Malays, who constitute about 32 percent of the population, dominate 15 state constituencies or 40 percent of the state seats.

The remaining three state seats such as Bagan Dalam, Prai and Bukit Tambun are equally mixed constituencies.

### **Indian-majority seats**

An observer noted that EC had not only controlled the increase in Chinese-majority seats but also precluded the formation of any Indian-majority state seats when re-drawing the electoral boundaries.

If EC upheld democratic principles, he said, the population of Indians in Bukit Tambun, Prai, Bagan Dalam and neighbouring constituencies of Bagan Jermal, Sungai Puyu and Bukit Tengah could have created at least three Indian-dominated state seats.

"But this would never happen," added the observer, a veteran local MIC leader.

EC's non-proportionate delineation exercise is evident when perusing the voter's ratio per state seat.

The Chinese-majority seats have an average 20,000 voters while the Malay-dominated constituencies have an average of 11,000 voters.

The Chinese-dominated Paya Terubong is the biggest state seat with 23,490 voters while the largest Malay seat, Permatang Berangan has only 14,049 registered voters.

Among other Chinese-majority seats are Bagan Jermal (21,083 voters), Batu Lanchang (20,855), Seri Delima (20,097), Pengkalan Kota (20,785), Berapit (19,745), Padang Lallang (19,653), Datuk Keramat (19,715), Machang Bubok (19,338), Sungai Pinang (19,071), Sungai Puyu (19,009), Kebun Bunga (18,863), Komtar (18,809) and Padang Kota (18,308).

Among other Malay-majority seats are Sungai Dua (14,087), Pinang Tunggal (13,889), Teluk Air Tawar (13,479), Penaga (13,335), Bertam (12,398), Sungai Bakap (12,261), Pulau Betong (12,142), Sungai Aceh (11,020) and Teluk Bahang (10,791).

"By perusing the state constituencies, one could sense that EC had collaborated with Umno to bolster the party's chances to claim the coveted chief minister seat," said Law.

### **Non-Malay interests**

In the last delineation exercise in 2002, Umno grabbed three of the seven newly created state seats in Penang.

The party now contests in 15 state seats while Gerakan, the ruling party in Penang, contests in only 13 state seats.

In the next delineation exercise in 2010, DAP believes Umno state seats will increase to 20, intensifying the claim for the chief minister post.

This issue will dominate DAP's campaign in Penang for the coming general elections.

Law said it was imperative for Penang voters to retain a Chinese chief minister because this would reflect the nation's multi-racialism.

He said voters should either vote in the present DAP-led opposition front as the ruling party or at least deny the Barisan Nasional government a two-third majority in the state legislative assembly.

"This would safeguard the non-Malay interests in Penang," he stressed.

Save Ourselves (Sos) secretary BK Ong said the EC delineation exercise has been unfair, unbalanced, unjust and failed to reflect the democratic norms of one-man one-vote principle.

"It takes two voters in Paya Terubong to equal the one vote cast in Teluk Bahang, for instance. Is that democracy or 'dia mau kerusi' principle?" he asked.

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