

Furore over 'racist slant' on voter numbers
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Pakatan Rakyat leaders have slammed attempts to paint a racial slant on the composition of newly registered voters.

NONEThey are upset over front-page reports by the Berita Harian for two consecutive days, claiming that for every one new Malay voter registered, there were 40 new non-Malay voters.

In the latest report today, the daily quotes Election Commission deputy chairperson Wan Ahmad Omar as claiming that the DAP was "very aggressive" in registering new Chinese voters.

Wan Ahmad also said that there was political apathy among Malay youths, coupled with the fact that they usually waited until the eleventh hour to register as voters, often resulting in them being ineligible to vote.

It was the Umno Youth's membership and voter registration bureau which came out with the 1:40 figure and its worried chief, Hishamuddin Yahya, claimed the trend showed that Malay political power was under threat.

Scare tactics

In response, DAP Youth chief Anthony Loke claimed that sources within the EC had confirmed that the 1:40 ratio was wrong and Umno Youth was conjuring figures as "scare tactics".

"This is a false and racist statement. It is used to scare Malays into thinking that they will lose political ground," said Loke, who is the Rasah MP, in a press conference at the Parliament lobby today.

NONEAccording to Loke (left), his news reports last year showed the EC as saying that 70 percent of new voters since 2008 were bumiputera and he challenged the commission to release the latest figures.

Similarly, PAS vice-president Mahfuz Omar when approached in Parliament, said he disagreed with the Berita Harian news reports, alleging that it was intentionally inaccurate and racist.

"The statement is made to scare the Malays into continuing their support of Umno. I hope the government can scrutinise the media reports, as it can create racial hatred," he said.

Automatic registration

Loke and several other Pakatan leaders said that even if Umno Youth and the EC's allegations were true, a simple solution would be for automatic registration of voters, which the government can legislate.

Instead of trying to paint the DAP and the Chinese as bogeymen, Loke said the EC and Umno Youth should endorse automatic registration of voters instead.

Pshamsul iskandarKR Youth chief Shamsul Iskandar (right) said if there were indeed failings in registering new Malay voters, the blame should fall on the EC for failure to be proactive.

"The easiest solution would be for the EC to adopt the automatic registration method. This way, the issue whether there are more or less Malay voters will never surface," he added.

He added that PKR has been actively registering voters, regardless of race.

According to the Berita Harian reports, there were an estimated 4.3 million eligible voters who have yet to register with the EC.

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