

Tighten postal voting rules, says MP
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Postal votes are easily open to manipulation, says opposition parliamentarian Anthony Loke, who wants the Election Commission (EC) to impose stricter regulations for these ballots.

The Rasah MP from DAP said yesterday that since postal ballots could be taken out of the polling centres before the actual voting day, there could easily be abuses.

The fact that postal ballots can be taken out and filled in for the convenience of the voters was confirmed by the EC in reply to a letter of complaint from Loke during the recent Sibul by-election.

EC deputy secretary Noordin Che Ngah explained that postal voters could cast their ballots at any time of the day, since they had the freedom to carry the ballots around, as provided for under the Election Commission Regulations (Postal Votes) 2003.

"But they (the voters) will have to send the ballot papers back to the administrative officer through the post offices, or submit them personally before 5pm on polling day," said Noordin.

Loke (left): "This is the reason why the ballots can become a 'commodity'.

"The ballots can even be sold, change hands and then be brought back to the counting centres. We would never know who had marked the ballot papers because such practice is allowed under the law. This is such a flawed rule as it is open to manipulation."

He also rubbished the EC's assertion that the delay in announcing the Sibul by-election result was caused by "ruckus" and "disturbance" during the counting of votes.

"The officials felt stressed out counting the ballot papers because there were ruckus and disturbance coming from outside the centres. This was what caused the delay," Noordin had said in the reply.

Due to the alleged ruckus, the EC only made the announcement that DAP's Wong Ho Leng won the parliamentary by-election at 11.30pm, three hours later than scheduled.

Loke challenged the EC statement and said there were no such "disturbances".

'EC did not get accurate reports'

"That is not true at all because I was there at the counting centre since noon and there were only several people there," said Loke.

"There was only a handful of people during the vote counting. But the people started coming in when the EC did not release the result, even though the counting had been completed.

"I think the EC did not get accurate reports from the officials and I am protesting this."

Loke told reporters that he had submitted documented evidence, with photographs, to the EC soon after the alleged incidents took place.

"Until today, they still want us to give more information. What else do they want? We even sent the photos to them."

He added that the EC reply showed its "lack of seriousness" in managing a clear and transparent postal ballot process.

In an exclusive interview, EC chairperson Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof had said that the commission was contemplating stringent procedures for postal ballots, but was not able to say for sure if this could be implemented before the next general election.

NONE "We hope they will take act to change the weak rules and can take drastic action in the near future," Loke added.

EC chief is a 'BN agent'

Meanwhile, at a separate press conference yesterday, Pakatan MPs R Sivarasa (PKR), Fuziah Salleh (PKR), Tony Pua (DAP) (right) and Dzulkefly Ahmad (PAS) hit out at Abdul Aziz, accusing him of being an 'agent' of the BN government and called for his removal from the post.

"He has displayed a total lack of independence, competence and fairness that one would expect from him as the head of the Election Commission," they said in a joint statement.

The four MPS added that the former civil servant had forgotten that he was no longer a government employee now and that as head of an independent commission, he should not bow to the whims of the government.

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