

Sarawak parties want EC to buck up over new voters
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Political parties in Sarawak are prepared to help but want the Election Commission (EC) to aggressively address the lukewarm response to the ongoing registration of new voters.

BN leaders met and contacted by Bernama described the statement by EC chairperson Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof last Saturday as a fact, but denied there was no initiative to do so and instead suggested the EC improve its delivery system first.

The state opposition, particularly DAP, claimed the party had taken the lead for the past three years.

NONE Abdul Aziz (left) was quoted as saying that Sarawak was among the states that had the highest number of unregistered voters in the country, and as of March 31 this year, there were 479,553 people aged 21 and above who had yet to register as voters in the state.

He was further quoted as saying that the participation of the state's political parties was not as encouraging as the peninsula-based political parties in registering new voters.

Sarawak BN Youth and PBB Youth chief Fadillah Yusof said PBB Youth had taken the initiative but was hampered by the EC's inefficiency.

For instance, he said, after the Sibu by-election in May this year, PBB had initiated a new voter registration drive in Sibu by providing two volunteers to assist the EC, but until today there were no appointment letters issued to them.

"We even had a soft launch of the event, but until today the volunteers are still awaiting for the appointment letters," he told Bernama in Kuching today.

In addition, he said, registering new voters in Sarawak was no easy task due to its vastness and challenging geographical nature.

SUPP Youth chief Sih Hua Tong said the party had been assisting to register new voters all this but sometimes it lacked media coverage.

He said registering new urban voters was quite difficult than in the rural areas. "Urban voters by nature are more mobile as they usually move to other places based on the current economic development in their respective areas."

'No time to register'

He believed the majority of those who had yet to register as voters were students or youths who just entered the job market and did not have the time to register.

James Masing Parti Rakyat Sarawak (PRS) president James Masing (right), who is also state land development minister, however, admitted the party had been "laidback" in registering new voters.

"I have immediately instructed all 31 party divisions to make the ground preparation to register new voters," he said, adding that it would start in all nine state seats represented

by PRS.

"Our target is to register 200 to 300 new voters in each constituency within two-and-a-half months," he said.

Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party (SPDP) president William Mawan was secretive about the issue as he said, it was part of the BN strategy.

"The issue was among matters discussed at the BN management meeting in Kuala Lumpur on Wednesday which I also attended," said the state social development and urbanisation minister, adding that the party would be proactive in the interest of BN.

Sarawak DAP secretary Chong Chien Jen, who is Kota Sentosa assemblyperson and Kuching MP, said the party had been active but claimed the lack of cooperation from the local councils had hampered its effort.

In one incident, he alleged, the party had planned to hold a registration exercise in Kuching but was disallowed by a local council for unknown reasons.

- Bernama

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