

Nazri baits Anwar over voter registration
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Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim has been taunted over his 'failure' to implement automatic voter registration while still the deputy premier.

Minister in the Prime Minister Department Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz levelled the charge when pointing out that issues with regard to automatic registration are not new and the matter is "more complicated than we think".

"You (Anwar) were the deputy prime minister (before September 1998)... you were in a higher position than me. Why didn't you do it back then?" he demanded during Question time in the Dewan Rakyat today.

Anwar (PKR-Permatang Pauh) evaded the challenge, merely saying the issue at hand was not about automatic registration but the need for independent observers to monitor the Election Commission (EC).

Mohd Nazri had earlier replied Abdul Aziz Abdul Kadir (PKR-Ketereh) about the government's efforts to resolve problems by implementing automatic registration of voters.

He said that automatic registration would lead to more complications as many Malaysians do not live at the addresses stated in their MYkad.

"If there is an election the voters will have complications - how will the voter be able to vote and where will he vote?"

"It is worrying as the percentage of voters coming out to vote on the day of an election will decrease if voters are registered according to their IC address and not where they are living. It can also affect the country's image globally."

While the government has no plan to implement automatic registration, he said, it is still studying "effective ways to improve the existing mechanism so that it will be more systematic and democratic".

Mohamed Aziz (BN-Seri Gading), in a supplementary question, asked if a watchdog is required to monitor the EC during elections.

He also wondered why monitors insist on giving a negative outlook in their reports about the EC.

Replied Nazri: "They (the opposition) are not happy unless they win every state and then get Putrajaya, and then they will say the EC is good."

"The EC is very successful... if not how could they (the opposition have won) Penang? Kelantan? Kedah? Selangor? How did we lose our two-thirds majority if the EC isn't doing its job properly?"

"We in the government don't at all interfere in the EC's business. If we lose, we say 'thank you' unlike the opposition," said Mohd Nazri hinting that opposition parties are sore losers.

'Excuse is nonsense'

Anwar retorted that, if the election process was as free as claimed, "why can't it be monitored?"

"If it is guaranteed to be free and fair - even a robber can win sometimes but that doesn't mean the process is right.

"I'm not saying the EC are robbers... I'm just saying that if there are still four million eligible people unregistered, there is a case to be considered and which needs to be improved. The excuse about addresses is nonsense!"

Anwar added that the minister should at least say that the government will find ways to rectify the problem instead of giving excuses.

However, Mohd Nazri said that voters have the right to decide whether or not to register.

"To vote is a democratic right and to register is their responsibility. If they don't want to vote it's their right. We can't force (them) and there are some who don't want to vote at all... and they will get angry when we register without their knowledge... so we won't force people," he added.

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