

Mafrel may work with ACA to curb poll abuses
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Beh Lih Yi

An election watchdog may work with the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) to curb abuses in the next general election.

Malaysians for Free and Fair Election (Mafrel) chairperson Abd Malek Hussin said the watchdog met with ACA director-general Zulkipli Mat Noor and other senior officers on Wednesday.

According to Malek, the response has been positive from the ACA.

"We invited the ACA to send their staff to attend our training so that they can respond better to the situation on the ground and carry out monitoring during the election.

"The ACA responded positively and asked us to submit our training schedule for their consideration," he said when contacted yesterday.

Malek also said he offered Mafrel election observers to be the 'eyes and ears' for the ACA in the next polls.

The 90-minute meeting was held for Mafrel to submit its election observation report on the Sarawak state polls held last May to the ACA.

Among others, the watchdog claimed it had found irregularities and offences which 'seriously marred' the polls.

Evidence needed

On the irregularities such as vote-buying during the state election, Malek said the ACA chief stated that the agency cannot act until the recipient of the money submits the evidence.

"Without this evidence, the ACA said it will have problems prosecuting (those involved)," he added.

Mafrel, which was formed in 2003, had also monitored the last national polls in 2004 as well as the by-election in Pengkalan Pasir, Kelantan last year and the Sarawak state election in May.

Based on a 45-day election observation which covers the post-election period as well, Mafrel said there was no report of ballot discarding, ballot stuffing or vote miscounting recorded.

However, it noted that "the wrongs clearly outweighed the rights" in the Sarawak election where the frauds were supported with verified and documented evidences.

Among this were voter registry discrepancies, abuse of public resources, biased media coverage, voter impersonation, missing names of voters and questionable postal ballots.

The watchdog claimed that vote-buying was widespread in Sarawak, especially in long

houses where their leaders were allegedly turned into conduits to pay the money.

"The amount paid ranged between RM20 to RM100 but there was a case where (a voter) was paid RM5," claimed Mafrel, adding that millions could have been spent on vote-buying.

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