

No need to reform 'capable' EC
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The government is not prepared to study and research current election laws or revamp the Election Commission (EC), Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz told the Dewan Rakyat today.

The minister was responding to a question from Kamarudin Jaffar (PAS-Tumpat) regarding the comments made by EC chairperson Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman.

Abdul Rashid previously said that EC's current rules and regulations are outdated and have many loopholes, requiring an amendment.

"As I've said, there is no need to revamp the EC. In the past 50 years we have not revamped any ministry. So why must the EC be singled out (to be revamped)?" said Nazri.

He said the government does not plan to set up any body to study the reforms because they found current electoral laws still applicable.

"(Based on the current electoral law), EC continues to carry out their work efficiently and with transparency in line with international standards.

"If there are any weaknesses that require fixing, the EC is always welcome to voice their suggestions to the government," he told the Dewan.

Nazri said if there are minor shortcomings that needed to be changed, the EC can forward its proposals to the government for consideration.

"The EC is capable of running elections efficiently and effectively under the existing legal framework. In fact, Malaysia's electoral system is recognised and accepted at international level," he added.

He said the Barisan Nasional (BN) does not want to govern the country as a "fake government" by manipulating the election system as done by some governments in other countries.

"We don't do that in Malaysia. We govern the nation in accordance with the people's wish. Our government is a people's government, elected by the people, for the people," he added.

What about reforms?

In a supplementary question, M Kulasegaran (DAP-Ipoh Barat) asked whether the government will consider the reforms suggested to improve the EC.

This includes the use of indelible ink, abolition of postal votes and using emails to register to vote.

Nazri said Malaysia's electoral system is fair and does not favour BN as evident from its defeat in Kelantan and Terengganu.

"It was under the present election process that we were defeated in Kelantan and Terengganu. In the 1999 general election, BN candidates lost because of postal votes but we accepted it.

"If this system has flaws or favoured the ruling party, then how can this happen? It should not be the case of when we win, we accept, when we lose, the system is unfair," he said.

On the use of email to register to vote, he said: "Many things can happen with email. Anything can be made up online."

"We already have bloggers doing all sorts of things and only the opposition believes what they write. Emails would only bring additional problems," he added.

As for indelible ink, the minister said it is only used in constituencies with a large number of voters like in India.

"Some constituencies in India can be made up of a million people. So it is difficult to register voters one by one. Hence to ensure nobody votes twice, they use indelible ink

"There are only 24,000 people in my constituency in Padang Renggas, it's a small number. We also use the identity card in this country. So we don't need to use the indelible ink," he said.

The minister then issued a challenge to Kulasegaran by asking him to contest in Padang Renggas.

"You can come and compete in my area and we'll see. No problem. Come and we can fight," he said, drawing laughter from the other parliamentarians.

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