

Voters urged to vote wisely
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Permatang Pauh voters should vote wisely today and send a clear message to those in power that they abhor the culture of corruption and bribery to win votes and support, which were rampant in last 10 days.
MCPX

Social reform group Aliran president P Ramakrishnan said the constituency's 58,459 registered voters have an important duty to remind Barisan Nasional that they cannot be bought over with ad hoc allocations, goodies, lunch and dinners.

"BN must be punished and taught a lesson in political morality that it had to be caring and generous at all times, not just during elections," he said, adding that only ballot punishment can educate BN effectively not to use corruption and vote-buying tactics to win elections in future.

Opposition icon Anwar Ibrahim faces BN's Arif Shah Omar Shah and Akim's Hanafi Hamat in a three-cornered tussle in the by-election.

In the past 10 days, BN government leaders have handed over RM100,000 to 30 mosques, RM30,000 to 60 surau and RM200,000 each to six Chinese primary and two Tamil schools.

Besides that about 10 Indian-based non-government organisations across Penang were given RM10,000 fund each.

BN leaders claimed the allocations had been planned long time back and "it was a coincidence that a by-election was taking place when the funds were distributed".

Aliran has no qualms in agreeing with Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak that the special allocations given by the federal government to mosques and surau in Permatang Pauh were "unique" because they were given "without the mosques and surau making any request for them".

Insult to intelligence

However, Ramakrishnan said any responsible Malaysian would know that if request was not made for funds, then there was no need for it, and added that Malaysians were flabbergasted when Najib said "the government understood that they needed funds to improve their facilities".

"This is an election gimmick to bribe the voters of Permatang Pauh otherwise the allocations would not be given during by-election.

"If the federal government was really concern about these mosques and surau, it should allocate the funds even after the by-election," he criticised.

Deputy Education Minister Datuk Wee Ka Siong was also not spared from Aliran criticism, for giving out funds to vernacular schools and claiming that "it has nothing to do with

Permatang Pauh by-election."

"It's an insult to intelligence," said Ramakrishnan on Wee's claim.

By channelling some RM6.4 million funds through the federal government, he said BN had deceived the voters that its million-ringgit gesture has no connection with the candidate's election expenditure.

"But all of us know that it's the same old BN trick in every election to the utter disadvantage of its opponents," he said.

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