

Election panel wants more bite

NST- 9/11/2007.

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BANGI: The Election Commission is seeking more power to enable it take action against election violators and to run polls effectively.

Stung by criticism that the body lacked independence and transparency, EC chairman Tan Sri Abdul Rashid Rahman said it would be more effective if it could control and prevent corruption and vote-buying activities during election periods.

He said currently, those found to carry out such activities are subject to investigations by the police and the Anti-Corruption Agency.

"We should have the power to punish those who misuse public facilities for campaigning purposes to ensure fair and balanced reporting by the mass media and to ensure equality on matters related to party funding.

"The EC should be given the power to solve petty problems and squabbles that arise during elections.

"The law should provide for a mechanism to adjudicate and solve complaints within a short time."

Abdul Rashid was speaking after giving a keynote address at the launch of the Elections Academy by

Dewan Rakyat speaker Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib.

The academy will train politicians and party workers on election campaigning, polling and vote-counting.

Abdul Rashid said current legislation governing electoral laws and the EC had been in place since 1957, and some of its provisions were no longer relevant.

"There are so many things lacking in the law and we cannot deliver what people want."

He proposed an independent commission to review electoral laws, including the functions of the EC, to give it more bite.

"The Federal Constitution, electoral laws and other related legislation need to be changed to meet the needs of the people and to ensure the EC can deliver its responsibilities.

"The EC should have the power to recruit and terminate staff and to conduct consultations with political parties, media and social institutions."

Abdul Rashid said he was making these suggestions as he had received complaints from the public.

"I can advise the independent body on what needs to be changed and what is lacking."