

**DPM rubbishes Bangladeshi votes-for-citizenship claim**  
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**By Yow Hong Chieh**

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 18 — Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin has denied claims that the Barisan Nasional (BN) government has given Bangladeshi workers here citizenship in exchange for their votes.

PKR called for a probe into claims in a Bangladesh government website that its citizens were offered Malaysian nationality for their support, adding it reinforced earlier complaints made to the Election Commission (EC).

"It's not true. I don't know whether the sources are trusted or not but obviously (it is) something which is not true," the deputy prime minister told reporters after opening the Makkal Sakti Convention at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

He said the government adhered to strict procedures when granting citizenship to foreigners and stressed that no special consideration had been given to Bangladeshis.

Muhyiddin also said BN was not so desperate as to give the green light to the wholesale naturalisation of Bangladeshis in exchange for their votes in the next election.

"Even if they vote, when it goes into the (ballot) box, no one will know who they voted for," he pointed out.

He added that the government will seek further clarification from the Malaysian embassy in Bangladesh on the issue.

A unit of the Bangladesh Prime Minister's Office claimed yesterday that its citizens working in Malaysia had been asked to vote for BN, prompting PKR vice president Fuziah Salleh to call for a Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) into the contentious issue.

According to the NGO Affairs Bureau of the Prime Minister's Office website, Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina met her Malaysian counterpart Datuk Seri Najib Razak last year where they discussed "long standing issues, including legalising Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia".

Both met while attending the 66th World Islamic Economic Forum in Kuala Lumpur in May 2010.

It said highly-placed sources claimed that during the meeting, Najib had assured Sheikh Hasina that he would consider the issue of legalising Bangladeshis working in Malaysia with the utmost sincerity.

"Today, the prime minister's office has allegedly received confirmation from some of our citizens working in several sectors in Malaysia since last year that they were given more than citizenship from the Malaysian Government. In fact, they now have been given a right to be a voter in upcoming Malaysian general elections.

"Another highly placed source from the prime minister's office has confirmed that

Bangladeshi workers may be easily conferred with Malaysian citizenship with the condition that they vote for the party that represents the government in power," the site said.

The page has since been removed from the NGO Affairs Bureau site.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein said last month that "baseless" allegations of foreigners being given the right to vote will be addressed by the parliamentary select committee on electoral reform.

He said that although the allegations have already been proven in most cases to be untrue, the National Registration Department (NRD) has engaged the Election Commission (EC) to answer opposition claims that at least 1,600 foreigners have been added to the electoral roll.

The bipartisan panel, which will be formed in the October sitting of Parliament, will likely see Pakatan Rakyat (PR) raise its claim that BN has granted foreigners citizenship in exchange for their support in a general election that must be called by mid-2013.

PR has also demanded an emergency sitting of Parliament to debate its claim that thousands of permanent residents have been given citizenship and the right to vote "in the blink of an eye".

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