

All talk, no action
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APATHY: ECEC chief says many not serious about taking part in electoral process

KUALA LUMPUR: VOCAL critics of the country's electoral system appear to be just blowing hot air rather than taking concrete action. Going by the Election Commission's recent findings there has been a lower-than-expected rate of voter registration.

EC chairman Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof said the "disappointing" number of new voters in the second quarter of the year reflected the people's apathy.

"People are just busy pointing fingers and complaining (about the electoral roll and system) but these figures show that many appear to be not serious about voting," he told the New Sunday Times.

Citing Selangor as an example, he said there were some 600,000 eligible voters who were not registered.

"The figures are not encouraging at all. Only about 130,000 eligible voters registered between April and June.

"As of April 3, 20.5 per cent of the total 16.2 million eligible voters in the country had yet to register.

"Though the EC has not gathered figures for Friday and Saturday, we do not expect a significant increase in the number of new registrations."

Yesterday was the deadline to register for those who want to cast their vote in the next general election.

Aziz said initially, EC had targeted 300,000 new registrations for each quarter, setting the year's target at 1.2 million. However, since the first quarter, the figures never went beyond 200,000.

He also said EC's one-month campaign to encourage voters to check their status since June 1 had not received encouraging response.

"As of June 28, only 300,000 of the 12.9 million registered voters took the initiative to check their status.

"The figure is less than three per cent of the number of registered voters."

On whether EC would extend the registration deadline for new voters, Aziz said the commission would discuss the matter soon.

Universiti Sains Malaysia political analyst Associate Prof Dr Sivamurugan Pandian believed that the discouraging figures could likely be caused by political fatigue. This could likely be brought about by the highlighting of certain political issues.

Universiti Utara Malaysia political analyst Associate Prof Dr Azizuddin Mohd Sani said it appeared that many Malaysians preferred to just stay away from voting.

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