

**Quit playing BN mouthpiece, Guan Eng reminds EC
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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 14 — The Election Commission (EC) should focus on conducting fair and orderly elections instead of being preoccupied with defending the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition, Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said today.

Lim, who is also DAP secretary-general, accused the EC of being biased and a BN tool to attack Pakatan Rakyat (PR) after federal opposition suggested holding state polls separately from an early 13th general election.

"The EC deputy chairman, Datuk Wan Ahmad Wan Omar, claimed that holding a separate state election from the 13th general election will be costly, disrupt classes and put teachers in disarray.

"However, he had clearly ignored the fact that there were no such objections when Sabah and Sarawak held separate state elections," said Lim in a statement.

Wan Ahmad had in an interview on the "Hello Malaysia" programme yesterday said schools had to be converted to polling centres again after the general election was over to make way for state polls and that teachers will also have to be redeployed for the state election.

He further said that RM400 million was necessary to conduct the general election and an additional RM50 million will be needed to hold a separate state election in Selangor.

Today, Lim asked if Wan Ahmad's statement that having a separate state election would put public order at risk meant the EC was questioning the competence and professionalism of the police.

"Such claims are not only dismissive of the police but also humiliating for the country, it is as if our security forces are unable to maintain security during the polling period," he said.

"Is the EC going to suggest that the Malaysian government apply for United Nations troops to monitor and maintain security here during the polling period?" Lim asked.

He said the EC should focus on their core competency in managing the election process professionally in an orderly, free and fair manner instead of being BN's mouthpiece.

The Selangor PR government had earlier announced its plan to abstain from holding a state election together with an early 13th general election.

Other PR-led states, Penang and Kedah, have yet to announce any concrete decision on this while the Kelantan state government has said it will dissolve the state assembly simultaneously with the Parliament.

Lim also said he is still awaiting the EC's response to the Penang's letter dated August 30 authorising it to conduct local government elections for the Penang and Seberang Perai municipal councils.

He reminded the EC that the Penang Local Government Elections (Penang Island and Province Wellesley) Enactment 2012 was passed in May and gazetted on July 5.

“As per Article 113(4) of the Federal Constitution, the federal or state law may authorise the EC to conduct elections.

“However, instead of doing their constitutional duty by replying to my letter authorising it to conduct local government elections in Penang, the EC appears more interested in defending Barisan Nasional in its open criticisms against the Selangor state government’s intention to hold separate state elections,” Lim said.

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