

**Interim Government Has Right To Use Government Machinery - Rais  
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 9 (Bernama) -- An interim government has the right to use government machinery as long as campaigning for an election has not started, said Information, Communications and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim.

According to him, when the Election Commission announces Nomination Day and the campaigning period, only then government machinery cannot be used for party purposes.

"However, government machinery for administration and executive functions remain as normal. Only for campaigning government machinery cannot be used," he said.

Rais told this to reporters after making a walkabout together with street performers and members of Karyawan around Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman and Masjid India here Tuesday.

He further explained that although the Dewan Rakyat had been dissolved, government departments and agencies could still function as normal as this was provided for by Articles 38 and 43 of the Federal Constitution, which cover the institution of the Malay rulers and functions of ministers.

"Now we are in a situation of a caretaker government, the government is still in existence...all ministries and government departments continue to function as normal," he said.

However, he said after Nomination Day, all government departments and agencies cannot take part in any programmes that involved political parties.

Rais also said that the 10 minutes airtime to be given to political parties to present their respective manifestos on Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) was a one-off offer.

He said no more airtime would be given to them during the campaigning period for the 13th General Election.

He explained that based on discussions between the ministry and the Broadcasting Department, the time given (10 minutes) was enough, and in fact was longer than the five minutes given for this previously.

He said 10 minutes was enough to present five pages of text of single spacing.

"So in 10 minutes, the parties can forward their policies, contents of their manifestos and pledges," he told reporters after making a walkabout together with street performers and members of Karyawan around Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman and Masjid India here today.

As such, Rais said he hoped the opposition parties which had turned down the offer, would change their minds as the opportunity was being given fairly to all political parties.

On another matter, Rais said he supported Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin's statement today calling on the National Fatwa Council to review all statements made by PAS spiritual leader Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat relating to Islam.

"...this is a big matter...shocking and has never happened before...it is only right that the Deputy Prime Minister ask the council to clear the matter," he said.

He was referring to the statement by Nik Aziz in which the Kelantan Menteri Besar had allegedly said that prayers by Umno members would not receive 'pahala' (divine merits) and that the Barisan Nasional (BN) built mosques because of contracts.

During the walkabout, Rais also handed over a RM20,000 contribution to Karyawan and 80 Malaysia netbooks to street performers.

He also said the ministry planned to come up with a special insurance scheme to cover street performers as had been done for actors, artistes and other mainstream entertainers.

He added that the ministry and Kuala Lumpur City Hall were also working closely to ensure street performers gained the proper recognition and opportunities to raise their standard of living.

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