

**Native voters 'threatened' with loss of rights if BN defeated, says Bersih
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By Emily Ding**

PETALING JAYA, May 1 — Some Barisan Nasional (BN) candidates in Sabah and Sarawak have allegedly warned residents there that they risk losing native customary rights if the coalition is not returned to power, polls watchdog Bersih said today.

The head of Bersih's Special Committee on Code of Conduct for the 2013 general election, Irene Fernandez, said that there was a pattern of such examples in both states, based on media reports and observations.

"Bersih 2.0's observation of East Malaysian sources found that candidates had threatened voters with the loss their native customary rights if Barisan Nasional does not acquire a new mandate in the upcoming general election," she told a press conference here.

Fernandez pointed to the BN candidate running in Mambong in Sarawak, who had been reported in the Borneo Post Online to have made such remarks at a dinner on Friday in Kuching.

"The BN candidate for Mambong, Datuk Seri Dr James Dawos, made an accusation that voting for Pakatan Rakyat will lead to the abolishment of the indigenous people's special rights," she said.

"He further said that BN shall be given the mandate to uphold and protect special rights related to immigration and National Customary Land," Fernandez added.

She said voters were allegedly threatened with the deprivation of basic amenities such as the construction of roads and water.

"Bersih strongly condemns the belittling of basic rights of East Malaysians and the manipulation of basic necessities, which should rightly be fulfilled regardless of votes and the upcoming general election. This is a responsibility of the government and cannot be qualified by or is conditional upon votes," she said.

Yap Swee Seng, another special committee member, said that anyone found to be inciting political fear or violence, and breaching Bersih's Code of Conduct governing the caretaker government in the upcoming general election would be "blacklisted" on the website bersih.org in an effort to name and shame offenders into complying with the rules.

Although admitting the blacklist did not have the force of law, Fernandez said: "It's to facilitate the rakyat to make a decision on who to vote for."

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