

PKR stands by phantom voter claims, blames EC for xenophobia
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PETALING JAYA, June 4 — PKR has stood by its allegations that foreign nationals of Bangladesh origin had voted illegally in Election 2013 despite the denial made by the country's High Commissioner here yesterday, insisting that it has proof to back its claims.

The Pakatan Rakyat (PR) party added that the Election Commission (EC) should also take full responsibility for the hostilities shown towards Bangladeshi migrant workers since its failure to deal with complaints of phantom voters had strengthened accusations that the government had won the May 5 polls through fraud.

"We accept their statement, that is their right but you have to ask this question: if majority of our people have been talking about it for a long time, I don't think your normal Malaysians would go and create news out of nothing and more importantly the integrity of an election is sacred and so important to our country.

"The way I look at it is that if there are any allegations about phantom voters whether they are Bangladeshi, Indonesians, Filipinos... what is more important is the authorities and the parties responsible for it which is the EC must take it seriously and investigate fully.

"But they have refused to probe so it strengthens the perception that there are phantom voters from overseas," PKR strategic director, Rafizi Ramli, told a press conference at the party's headquarters here.

Yesterday, the government of Bangladesh denied allegations that its Malaysian-based workers had acted as phantom voters in Election 2013, adding that the "xenophobic" accusation has subjected its citizens to abuse.

The country's High Commissioner to Malaysia Atiqur Rahman also laughed off claims that 40,000 of Bangladeshi citizens had been transported into Malaysia to vote for the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) a week before the May 5 polls.

He further described the allegations as "propaganda" and "political manipulation" that might put innocent Bangladeshis under increased threat and, at the same time, impose a negative image of its country unfairly.

PKR vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar said although the party conceded it was wrong to target Bangladeshi migrant workers, the EC could have done its part to prevent the xenophobic reaction towards foreign nationals if it had acted on the complaints.

"Of course, the attacks and hostilities should not be brought against the foreigner, the EC should have prevented this. We are not asking the public to hate and so on but we must not let this incident to become something that we easily forget.

"You have to push and demand that EC and relevant conduct investigations most professionally," she told the same press conference.

PR leaders have accused the ruling coalition of rigging the Election 2013 results through fraudulent practices that included transporting foreign nationals into key states in Malaysia

to vote for Barisan Nasional (BN).

BN leaders, however, described the allegation as baseless and said the opposition has yet to show any concrete evidence to support its claims.

Despite a resurgent opposition, BN clung on to power by winning 133 seats against PR's 88, although this was seven fewer than what it garnered in 2008. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's coalition also lost the popular vote for the first time since 1969.

PR and electoral reform group Bersih are now planning to file election petitions to challenge some results from the May 5 polls, claiming to have strong evidence of fraud in what had been Malaysia's closest election to date.

Among the evidence compiled are videos that purportedly showed foreign nationals being flown in a day before the election.

Najib had recently announced that his government would see through its plans to reform the electoral system by placing the Election Commission (EC) under a special parliamentary committee.

PR leaders, however, claimed the move was more of a public relations exercise and called for the resignation of the commission's leadership as the first condition towards genuine polls reform.

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