

Kit Siang suggests single-function EC in revamp proposal
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BY CLARA CHOOI

KUALA LUMPUR, June 9 — Lim Kit Siang today suggested a total revamp of the Election Commission (EC) that will see the regulator's duties reduced to a single function - to ensure free and fair elections at federal and state levels.

He said voter registration and the revising of electoral rolls, and the delimitation of constituencies should be duties handled separately by other, equally independent bodies.

"In other democratic countries, these... functions are carried out by separate bodies and this is something we can emulate if it will lead to a cleaner, more just and fairer electoral system," he said.

"I have always contended in Parliament in the past four decades that the EC has a constitutional duty to conduct a clean, free and fair elections and not just to mechanically conduct an election process," he added.

Under the Federal Constitution, the EC is currently tasked to carry out the elections, register voters and revise electoral rolls, and delimit constituencies.

But citing the just-concluded May 5 polls, Lim said it was high time that the EC's functions are revamped to ensure the entire polling process is clean and fair, and is subjected to sufficient checks and balances.

The DAP adviser repeated Pakatan Rakyat's (PR) allegations of widespread fraud and cheating that allegedly took place during the polls, saying the EC had failed in its duties to ensure the contest was fair.

"Thousands of electoral offences, including abuses and corrupt practices from money politics, are committed in every general elections, but nobody has been charged for such electoral offences," he said.

"Similarly, the absence of media freedom, particularly the misuse and abuse of the government ownership and control of radio and television channels, highlights another major flaw of the EC in its failure to carry out clean, free and fair elections," he added.

The revamped EC must have full powers and responsibilities in conducting fair polls, including taking action to stop abuses like money politics and biased media coverage during the election period, Lim said.

"May be it is time that Malaysia has an EC whose sole duty is to conduct clean, free and fair elections, while the task of registering voters and preparing the electoral roll as well as the delimitation of constituencies are given to other bodies," he added.

Lim said that with access to information technology, Malaysia should be able to introduce automatic registration for voters when they come of age.

On the delimitation of constituencies, Lim pointed out that other countries task other commissions to carry out the process.

In Malaysia, he said this segregation of duties would help the EC maintain its independence and professionalism as its commissioners would not be involved in lopsided gerrymandering of constituencies to benefit certain parties.

"The revamp of the electoral system and the Election Commission should be top priority in the first meeting of the 13th Parliament starting on June 24," he said.

"In fact, it should be one of the major terms of reference of a Royal Commission of Inquiry which should be set up to inquire into the 13th General Election."

Immediately after the May 5 polls, PKR's #siasatPRU13 team made a series of exposes on what it claimed was proof of polls fraud as the opposition moved to pressure Putrajaya to implement polls reform, starting with the complete overhaul of the EC.

PKR strategy director Rafizi Ramli also recently revealed that all three PR parties have confirmed plans to file 41 election petitions — three by the DAP, 20 by PKR and 18 by PAS — before the June 12 deadline is up.

According to Rafizi, at least 30 seats should undergo a re-election due to the high probability of vote manipulation in these constituencies. PR had won 89 seats against BN's 133 in May 5 polls.

But apart from the court petitions, PR and other civil society groups have been hosting mammoth rallies to since May 5 to push their agenda for reform, outlining three main conditions with the first being the resignation of all EC members for its failure to ensure a free and fair Election 2013.

The "Black 505" rallies as they are called, were also created as a movement of protest against PR's claims of irregularities during the polls, which saw the ruling BN retain power despite losing the popular vote.

In the over 10 such protests held so far, each one drew mammoth crowds of tens of thousands of people, turnouts that PR leaders have said is proof of their solid backing from more than half the country's registered voters.

Despite losing the overall election, PR's candidates had garnered more than half the total votes cast on May 5 at 51 per cent while BN lost the popular vote contest with their 47 per cent, a first since the 1969 general election.

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