

**We won't allow this election commission to change boundaries, vows Anwar
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Pakatan Rakyat (PR) will not endorse any delineation of electoral boundaries by the Election Commission (EC) with its current leadership still calling the shots, said Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Electoral laws allow redelineation exercises every eight years subject to approval by a two-thirds super majority in Parliament. The last redelineation exercise was in 2003 before Barisan Nasional (BN) last won such a majority in 2004.

"We firmly oppose this because the EC, with its tarnished track record and history, cannot be entrusted to carry out such an important task.

"It doesn't make sense and we will fiercely oppose this," Anwar told The Malaysian Insider in Kuala Lumpur.

As BN currently has a simple majority in Parliament, it would be difficult for the EC to get the changes endorsed without opposition support.

The opposition has in the past inferred that the boundary realignment is skewed towards BN's interests.

And each time the boundaries are redrawn, historically at least, Umno and BN always enjoy sweeping victories.

When the last delineation exercise was carried out was in 2003, PAS had just won big in the 1999 polls, mainly due to the support of the Malays who sympathised with Anwar following his sacking from government.

In the 2003 delineation exercise, the opposition said some constituencies were tampered with, whereby a large number of Chinese and Indian voters were assimilated into areas which were largely Malay-dominated.

Glaring examples include the Kuala Kedah constituency, which was won by Mohamad Sabu in 1999, and Pokok Sena, which was won by Mahfuz Omar.

During the delineation, the states where Umno enjoyed strong support saw more constituencies created. Johor saw its number of constituencies increase to 26.

Due to this, in 2004, BN won by a big margin with a large portion of the victory due to the delineation exercise in 2003.

However, the 2003 exercise was successful due to the fact that at that time BN had two-thirds majority in Dewan Rakyat.

In 2011, the delineation exercise was not carried out due to the fact that BN only had a simple majority, despite EC deputy chair Datuk Wira Wan Ahmad Wan Omar's excuse that it had to be postponed due to the 13th general election.

Opposition leaders described the excuse in 2011 as hypocritical because in 2003 the delineation exercise was carried out a year before the general polls.

For Anwar, the delineation exercise was not a question of two-thirds majority but a question of the EC's credibility, which must be resolved.

"The electoral rolls issue hasn't been resolved until now. Sort that out first," he said, referring to dubious voters in the rolls.

Anwar was also not convinced of changes in the EC despite new secretary Datuk Abdul Ghani Salleh being picked to replace Datuk Kamarudin Mohd Baria who retired.

"The solution is not replacing a retiring secretary with someone new. The solution is changing the top senior personnel," said Anwar.

PR has promised a street rally if the EC carried out a new delineation exercise for parliamentary and state constituency boundaries before cleaning up the electoral rolls.

Election watchdog Bersih has threatened to launch another street rally, Bersih 4.0, if the clean-up doesn't take place.

Co-chair Datuk Ambiga Sreenivasan said early this month, "This is not a threat. It is a promise."

Anwar noted that apart from the transparency factor, voters' interests must also be studied in the delineation exercise.

Among others, the PR government in Selangor can reject the delineation proposal because they have more than two-thirds majority in the state assembly.

However, if a delineation exercise is not carried out in Selangor, the people in the state will have the most to lose as they will be unfairly represented.

Selangor has 1,924,281 registered voters but the number of MPs from that state is only 22, compared to Johor which has 26.

"The number of people for each parliamentary seat and state assembly seat in Selangor is too high compared with other states," PAS central election secretary Abdul Shakur Tahir.

"If the parliamentary and state assembly seats in Selangor are not increased, it will be the people in the state who will lose out."

For example, Abdul Shakur pointed out that Johor has far more parliamentary seats even though it has fewer voters.

The same goes for Putrajaya, which only had 10,000 registered voters for one parliamentary seat.

He also said Hulu Selangor had 74,939 voters while Gombak had 106,747 voters. Comparatively, Segamat only had 39,807 voters and Pagoh 40,515.

"This is a scenario which is extremely unfair on voters in Selangor. Something must be done to reach a consensus to ensure the public's interests are taken care of.

"This means, delineation is a must, whether people or parties like it or not. But it must be carried out fairly with the public's interests at heart and not to safeguard the interests of selected parties," he said.

Under the current situation, whether they want to or not, the EC for the first time in its history must get the blessings of Pakatan to carry out the delineation exercise.

Failing which, the EC will have failed to carry out its responsibilities. - August 31, 2013.

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