

**Tribunal hears of murder in the run-up to GE13**  
**Malaysian Insider**  
**Sept 19 , 2013**  
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The Bersih People's Tribunal heard today how an aide to the Parti Keadilan Rakyat candidate for the Tapah parliamentary seat was murdered in the run-up to the polls.

The PKR candidate K. Vasantha Kumar, who lost the seat to MIC's Datuk M. Saravanan in the May 5 polls, told the tribunal that his security aide, K. Murugan, had earlier received many threatening calls from people he knew and did not know.

"Murugan told me that he was warned to stop campaigning for me or he would be chopped up with a parang and killed," said Vasantha.

Murugan was hired after Vasantha and his campaign workers were attacked and threatened on several occasions during the campaign period.

"We were attacked once in the compound of the Tapah district police headquarters in the presence of the OCPD, " Vasantha revealed.

When asked by the tribunal's head of legal team Professor Gurdial Singh if any action had been taken by the police officer, Vasantha said, "the man who attacked us was picked up and then released the same day and since then, no further action has been taken". He also said that more police reports were lodged by several of his campaign workers after they had received threats through phone calls and SMSes.

Gurdial: There was a series of threats to life, damaging of campaign materials, some in the presence of police. Yet, nothing was done?

Vasantha: Yes.

Speaking about the events leading to Murugan's death, Vasantha noted that he last saw his security aide at 10.30pm on May 1 after a ceramah in Taman Sri Bidor.

"I was also there at the ceramah with two other state seat candidates from Pakatan Rakyat," Vasantha said.

Thirty-six-year-old Murugan was believed to have received a call and left the ceramah to meet with the caller.

The next day, Murugan's sister lodged a missing person's report at the Tapah police station.

Four days later his body, with feet and hands bound, was found afloat in a pond at Bemban Industrial Park, Batu Gajah.

Vasantha was earlier reported as saying that Murugan had worked tirelessly for him in the tough battle against MIC's Datuk M. Saravanan. He organised political rallies and worked the ground sufficiently that he got noticed.

Vasantha had said: "We believe that Murugan was murdered to intimidate the voters. He

was well-known locally and it was his job to organise ceramahs for me."

The discovery of Murugan's body on polling day caused chaos in Vasantha's camp, disrupting their campaign efforts.

"It made me and my supporters fearful. We panicked and were scared to go out to meet supporters. We were scared that we would meet BN supporters and its candidate, Saravanan," Vasantha added.

The fight for the Tapah seat was shrouded with further controversy after it was alleged that a MIC woman leader was picked as the head of a polling station and RM100 vouchers were handed out to 600 voters.

PKR's election petition was dismissed and costs totalling RM150,000 was ordered payable to Saravanan, the returning officer and the Election Commission (EC).

According to Vasantha, all police reports and complaints to the EC were ignored and his legal team was denied the opportunity to present their case in the election court.

Attendees at the tribunal were also shown a video of the furore that ensued when PKR supporters questioned EC officers and police on the delay of the arrival of ballot boxes.

Gurdial informed the panelists that although voting had ended at 6pm, several ballot boxes only arrived after 11pm at the tallying centre.

The video showed Federal Reserve Unit (FRU) personnel entering the tallying centre and aggressively pushing Vasantha and his supporters. Several were also hit by the baton-wielding FRU personnel.

Police were also shown pushing the polling agents out of the tallying centre, an act which Gurdial pointed out is against the law.

"They were all well outside the gate when counting was done," said Gurdial.

An hour after Vasantha and his supporters were chased out of the centre, results of the polls came out with Saravanan being announced as the winner.

"They only allowed me inside at 1am after the counting was done. I was escorted by two policemen," said Vasantha.

"What happened when you went in?" asked Gurdial.

"They started announcing the results," Vasantha replied.

Vasantha also pointed out that Saravanan was in the hall the entire period - from the time the boxes arrived to when the results were announced. - September 19, 2013.

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