

Bar wants polls body to act on parties campaigning before by-election nominations
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The Bar Council wants the Election Commission (EC) to act on complaints that parties had started campaigning before the Kajang by-election officially started.

Its president Christopher Leong said the EC should enforce the rule, irrespective of whether it is the Barisan Nasional or Pakatan Rakyat.

He said the EC rules on campaigning are clear and there is a specific time to campaign.

“All parties should carry out its activities during this period. If anyone feels the laws should be changed then change it.

“But for now everyone must operate within the law which should be enforced by the EC,” he said today at a press conference in Kuala Lumpur.

Electoral reforms coalition Bersih 2.0 yesterday accused both Pakatan Rakyat and Barisan Nasional of election misconduct in the days leading to the Kajang by-election, and said the EC is to blame for not taking action and allowing it to continue.

Bersih 2.0 chair Maria Chin Abdullah said the EC was not addressing election misconduct seriously and has allowed it to continue to happen.

Utusan Malaysia reported that Selangor police were investigating six reports, including one by the newspaper, which complained that Anwar had been campaigning before the nomination date.

Anwar, the PKR candidate for the Kajang by-election, had been addressing gatherings in the area to explain the party's “Kajang move”.

“BN started with threats and smear campaigns,” said Maria, citing a “threat” to the Chinese voters in Kajang by former minister Tan Sri Zainuddin Maidin.

Zainuddin had that the Chinese have a “golden opportunity” to regain the trust of the Malays following the “Chinese tsunami” at the 13th general election last year.

Bersih said Zainuddin's remarks could also be seen as flouting election laws.

“Bersih 2.0 is concerned that the EC will not conduct a free and fair by-election if it continues to remain silent on crucial electoral issues,” she added.

Anwar denied breaking the law by campaigning early for the seat and insisted that it was the BN which had launched an aggressive campaign against him through the media.

The EC has set March 23 as the polling date; nominations will be on March 11. – February 11, 2014.

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