

EC directive paves way for phantom voters, says PH youth rep

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By Richard T.W.

Pakatan Harapan Youth representative says Election Commission's move to stop distributing draft of electoral roll will also 'curtail democracy'.

KUCHING: Sarawak Pakatan Harapan Youth is protesting the Election Commission's (EC) decision to stop distributing the first quarter draft of the supplementary electoral roll to political parties.

The opposition youth coalition, which comprises the youth wings of PKR, DAP and Amanah, said the move would "curtail democracy" and make it easier for phantom voters to cast their vote in the next general election.

"With such a directive from the EC, it will be extremely difficult for political parties and NGOs to go through the draft electoral roll to check for phantom voters or voters who may be deceased," said the coalition's representative, Simon Siah.

He was speaking to reporters here today after presenting a memorandum to Sarawak EC director Takun Sunggah.

The coalition requested that the EC withdraw the new directive, and allow political parties and NGOs easy access to the draft electoral roll, as well as upgrade the roll to an electronic system.

Last week, EC secretary Abdul Ghani Salleh confirmed that the commission would no longer provide copies of the draft electoral roll during the display period. He said the commission felt that a public display was sufficient to inform voters of their status.

According to him, the EC decided to stop supplying the draft electoral roll, in book form or compact disc, starting from the first quarter of 2017.

Siah however pointed out that it was a prior practice that the draft supplementary roll be prepared either in book form or electronically for political parties to purchase.

Parties were then able to check through the electoral roll and object if there were suspicious voters listed before they were officially gazetted, he said.

Political parties can only object within 14 days of the roll's publication.

Under the new directive, the roll can only be viewed and checked via hard copies in the EC's office in each state.

"This is making the checking of the draft more difficult than it already is as there are thousands of new voters registered and voters could have changed their polling addresses," Siah said.

The EC's decision has also been criticised by election watchdog Bersih 2.0.

"The latest decision by the EC not to supply the revised supplementary electoral roll to political parties and stakeholders does not augur well for the image of the EC as an institution mandated by our Federal Constitution to carry out and conduct elections and prepare and revise the electoral roll for such elections," said Sarawak Bersih vice-chairperson Ann Teo, who witnessed the handing over of the memorandum.

"By making access to the roll difficult or limiting such access, public confidence in the EC is waning as the move is seen to be making the roll less transparent and more open to manipulation."

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