

Polls committee a ploy 'to deflect heat from EC'
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Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim has accused Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak of deflecting the heat from the Election Commission (EC) by announcing the formation of a parliamentary select committee on electoral reforms last night.

Anwar said Pakatan Rakyat agrees in principle with the formation of the committee, but claimed that the government has more insidious reasons for the move.

"What is important is that we want action now. Why is the EC given a reprieve? Why is fraud being condoned?" he said in a scathing attack on Najib.

Last night, Najib announced the government's plan to form the committee to discuss all electoral reforms needed to find a "bipartisan agreement without any suspicion that there is manipulation by the government".

Anwar stressed that the announcement amounts to an admission that Pakatan and Bersih 2.0 were right on the money in claiming there are serious flaws in the electoral system.

"... (Najib) has admitted (Bersih 2.0 was right), and the people have paid a price for that, getting beaten up and all that," he said when contacted.

He said the issue now is for the government to work on making the EC truly independent so that the commission can start to fulfil its responsibilities.

"Notwithstanding the fact that even our parliamentary system also needs reform, the government must show good faith by getting the EC to act now.

"What is stopping the EC from cleaning up the rolls or reforming postal votes, registering overseas Malaysians as voters, and stopping (the registration of) foreigners as voters? Nobody in this country would feel that the EC is independent of Umno."

Najib will 'drag' out issue

Anwar posited that the proposed select committee itself will pose a problem in implementation, as the government is not known for taking the role of Parliament seriously.

He stressed that Najib had not indicated the government's plans to hold an emergency sitting - which is necessary to form the special committee - and raised questions as to how far the premier and his administration are committed towards electoral reform.

"Look at Parliament in England - when the riots broke out they called an emergency sitting, when the News of the World exposé made the news they called an emergency sitting... in our case, Parliament is completely relegated to being a rubber stamp of the government.

"There was nothing in Najib's statement (last night) to suggest that action will be taken by the EC now. He will delay the matter in the committee."