

Bersih says PSC pointless once Parliament dissolved

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The parliamentary select committee (PSC) on electoral reform would be pointless if Prime Minister Najib Razak goes ahead with the general election as Parliament would have to be dissolved, said Bersih 2.0.

The coalition for electoral reform also expressed regret today at Najib's statement issued yesterday that the next GE could be called anytime without waiting for the PSC to complete its task.

"This totally defeats the purpose and spirit of setting up the PSC as it is meant to resolve serious fraudulent practices in the electoral processes.

"The PSC would be pointless if Parliament is dissolved before the committee presents its report to Parliament," said Bersih's steering committee in a statement.

In this case, a new committee would have to be established to continue the task of poll reforms after the next general election.

Bersih 2.0 reiterated its demand that the polls be held off until immediate reforms such as a clean-up of the electoral roll, use of indelible ink, automatic registration of voters, reform of absentee voting and minimum 21 days campaign period are implemented.

Bersih wants royal commission too

The polls reform coalition said that it also wants a royal commission of inquiry to study "the larger issues of elections and democracy such as electoral system, a full review of all electoral laws and the membership of the Election Commission".

Bernama yesterday reported the PM as saying that the next general election could be called "anytime and is not bound by the work of the parliamentary select committee".

This comes just days after Najib first announced a proposal to form the PSC in response to demands for free and fair elections.

On July 9, Bersih 2.0 held a rally in Kuala Lumpur that saw an estimated turnout of 50,000 demanding electoral reform.

Najib was heavily criticised for the heavy handed police crackdown on the peaceful rally that saw 1,667 people arrested.

Bersih suggested five recommendations on the PSC - that an opposition MP heads the PSC, that the committee engages experts as resource persons, exercises the highest degree of transparency possible, conducts nationwide public hearings, and that the panel be given leave to sit while Parliament is in session.

Shocked by military's partisanship

Bersih is also stunned by Armed Forces chief General Zulkifeli Mohd Zin who has ticked off a number of ex-servicemen for confessing to committing electoral fraud on orders of their superiors.

On Wednesday, four men revealed that on the orders of their commanding officers, they had marked thousands of postal votes in three separate general elections between 1978 and 1999 while serving at army and air force bases across the country.

This revelation is the second after an ex-army man came forward earlier this month, claiming that he ,too, was ordered to mark postal votes for other military personnel.

In an immediate response, General Zulkifeli described the whistleblowers as traitors at a rare press conference held on Thursday.

Bersih said that public servants should refrain from making partisan statements.

“The allegations made by these four officers should not be viewed as a threat to the army or to any other institutions but as an expression of concern with the electoral process which they claimed to be flawed.”

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