

BN heavyweight backs 'no polls before reform' demand
Malaysiakini.com
September 6, 2011

Pakatan Rakyat has welcomed support from United Pasokmomogun Kadazan Dusun Murut Organisation (Upko) president Bernard Dompok in pressuring Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak not to hold elections before the electoral reforms recommended by the parliamentary select committee (PSC) are implemented.

According to a report in English language daily New Straits Times today, Dompok (right) said the PSC on electoral reform must be allowed to complete its job before the next general election is called.

"Otherwise, if the election is called before the committee completes its task, it will defeat the purpose of setting it up in the first place," he was quoted as saying after launching the party's divisional triennial general meeting in Tuaran, Sabah, yesterday.

The plantation industries and commodities minister pointed out that if Parliament is dissolved, the committee will also be dissolved.

"The first thing that needs to be done is to clean up the electoral roll by addressing the weaknesses, whether perceived or real, in the system.

Need for electoral roll that's beyond question

"By doing so, the people will then have no reason to complain. We must be prepared to admit what is wrong and take credit for what is right, so that is why we need to prepare a roll that is beyond question," Dompok said.

PKR vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar (below, left) welcomed his statement, saying it showed that the minister felt the pulse of the rakyat who were clamouring for free and fair elections.

"However, I would argue that the rakyat's demands are specific - as seen through the polling done by Merdeka Center. The rakyat want the eight demands made by Bersih 2.0 to be fulfilled.

"The scope of the parliamentary select committee must not fail to incorporate these demands," the Lembah Pantai MP told Malaysiakini today.

Her counterpart in PAS, Salehuddin Ayub, hoped more ministers and BN leaders would join the call to push for genuine electoral reforms.

"I'm very happy that what has been mentioned by Pakatan has raised the eyebrows of all parties, including BN component parties. It is a good sign," Salehuddin said when contacted.

The Pokok Sena MP added that the opposition coalition was still waiting for the assurance from the premier before it decided on its position about the select committee.

The PSC will be formed in the next sitting of Parliament, which will commence on Oct 3.

Dompok was tasked by the government to lead the previous PSC on integrity in 2007, but he then resigned as committee chairperson on grounds that as a minister, he "will not be able to do justice to the tasks assigned to the committee by Parliament".

However, it is widely believed that his resignation was precipitated by the hostile attitude shown to the committee by government departments in the inquiry into the issue of identity cards in the state of Sabah.

The PSC on integrity did not produce any report when Parliament was dissolved in February 2008.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
<http://www.malysiakini.com/news/174944>