

PSC motion tabled, Emergency laws to be repealed
Malaysiakini.com
October 03,2011
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The government has moved toward the formation of the parliamentary select committee (PSC) to look into electoral reforms, alongside introducing Bills to repeal the Restricted Residence Act and the Banishment Act.

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak tabled the motion to abolish the emergency laws for first reading this morning, following his announcement last month to make Malaysia 'the best democracy' in the world.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz, on his part, tabled the motion to set up the PSC.

He said the committee will be represented by nine parliamentarians - five Barisan BN MPs (right), three Pakatan Rakyat MPs and one Independent representative.

Representing BN in the committee chaired by Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Dr Maximus Ongkili, are Alexander Nanta Linggi, Mohd Radzi Sheikh Ahmad, Dr Fong Chan Onn and Hulu Selangor MP P Kamalanathan.

Representing the opposition, meanwhile, are Azmin Ali, Dr Mohd Hatta Ramli and Anthony Loke.

The sole Independent MP on the committee is Wangsa Maju legislator Wee Choo Keong.

The PSC will be given six months to come up with suggestions to improve the electoral system.

Nazri said the Election Commission (EC) has been transparent in conducting polls over the past 54 years and has proven its authority in ensuring "credible elections".

However, the de facto law minister noted that, if it is the will of the public for reforms in the way polls are conducted, it becomes the duty of legislators to amend laws and regulations.

"The EC is of the opinion that the current system and methods are still relevant and should be maintained.

"But it does not mean the EC is not prepared to for the paradigm shift and transformation for the improvement in (its) management and operation to ensure that (its) three core functions (are) implemented transparently, with integrity and effectively," he said.

'Smart move'

The government's move to form the committee is to ensure there will be no more accusations against the EC, said Nazri.

The motion to form the PSC was passed unanimously later today in the Dewan Rakyat.

bersih rally petaling street 090711The credibility of the election system became a major concern after electoral reform group Bersih 2.0 held a rally on July 9 that saw tens of thousands of people descending on Kuala Lumpur.

"The proposal to form the PSC... is a smart move to dispel accusations by irresponsible parties that the present practice of election is not democratic, fair and transparent," Nazri said, adding that MPs on the committee will be giving equal opportunities to air their views.

The debate on whether or not to form the PSC is expected to be wrapped up in the next two days, to allow for debate on Najib's motion to repeal the emergency laws to begin on Wednesday.

The Restricted Residence Act 1933 and Banishment Act 1959 allow for restriction of movement without trial.

Parliament and anti isa internal security act however, the abolition of the draconian Internal Security Act (ISA) and three emergency-related laws were not discussed in the House today.

Parliament is only expected to deal with these at its next session in March next year, to allow time for the government to draft two new laws to replace the ISA.

Last week, Najib had also revealed that the government will table a Bill next month to amend Section 27 of the Police Act 1967, which relates to freedom of assembly laws.