

PSC chief slammed over Bersih snub
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By S Pathmawathy

Parliamentary select committee (PSC) on electoral reform chairperson Maximus Johnity Ongkili's arbitrary announcement that the banned Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (Bersih 2.0) is not welcome to make recommendations to the PSC has earned the wrath of Pakatan Rakyat MPs.

NONEslamming Ongkili (left) for his statement, Pakatan's PSC members Dr Hatta Ramli (PAS-Kuala Krai) and Anthony Loke (DAP-Rasah), said Ongkili should perhaps handle everything himself if he was going to make such decisions on his own.

"Although Ongkili is a minister, he is just like any of us on this committee," said Hatta, adding that the science, technology and innovation minister should have consulted the entire nine-member panel before speaking at the press conference yesterday.

Ongkili had said that since Bersih had been an declared illegal under the Societies Act prior to the July 9 rally, its members could partake in the discussions as individuals, not as representatives of the coalition.

"Bersih is not a registered organisation. They have to come as individuals... of course (Bersih 2.0 chairperson S Ambiga can come as a member of the (Malaysian) Bar Council or as Datuk Ambiga (herself)," Ongkili had said.

The PSC on electoral reform, which was set up on Monday, comprises five BN parliamentarians, three from Pakatan Rakyat and an Independent. The panel's first meeting is scheduled to be held on Oct 12.

pas muktamar 130610 hatta ramli 2Hatta said: "He rejected Bersih as a stakeholder in this matter... it is not a big matter but the decision was made by him alone. The first meeting hasn't even convened, and it is in that meeting where we will decide on the regulations we want to set and other matters.

"He may be a minister, but in this capacity as PSC chairperson, he is on the same level as the rest of us. Who is Maximus Ongkili to make that decision without consulting the rest of us?"

Hatta said Ongkili's unilateral decision was "very unbecoming" of the minister.

He also said Ongkili's position as a minister and as the chair of the PSC was one of the main concerns expressed by civil society groups when Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak announced its formation last month.

"We are worried that they will behave like the ministers in their ministries, the way they order their officers around. If he is going to make such decisions on his own, maybe he should handle (everything) himself," Hatta added.

'We are not a rubber stamp committee'

azlanLoke said Ongkili's comment that there will be six public hearings was another decision taken without the committee's approval.

"We need to make the decisions together, in a meeting. He cannot make such unilateral decisions," Loke said, adding that the work of the panel had started off on the "wrong-footing".

Besides Ongkili, the other four BN representatives on the PSC are Kapit MP Alexander Nanta Linggi

(PBB), Kangar MP Mohd Radzi Sheikh Ahmad (Umno), Alor Gajah MP Fong Chan Onn (MCA) and Hulu Selangor MP P Kamalanathan (MIC).

Other than Hatta and Loke, the third Pakatan representative on the panel is Gombak MP Azmin Ali of PKR, while Independent Wangsa Maju MP Wee Choo Keong is its ninth member.

"I would like to remind Ongkili that this is a bipartisan committee. Not a rubber stamp committee to agree with every decision he makes. Every decision made must be based on consensus," Loke said.

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