

Groups threaten to stop GE13 if no reforms made

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Several non-government movements have sworn to stop the next general election if the promised overhaul to the electoral system is not meted out first.

Solidariti Anak Muda Malaysia (SAMM) and the Malaysian Civil Liberties Movement (MCLM) warned the government that they will not hesitate to stage protests to topple the ruling powers if the rights of the people are not upheld.

NONE“This time, don’t rule out the possibility of the people taking part not only in a protest but in a movement to change the regime that has long failed to secure the rights of the people for a democratic election process that is clean and fair,” said SAMM chair Badrul Hisham Shaharin (left) .

In a statement today, Badrul, better known as Chegubard, urged that the much-anticipated 13th general election be held only after electoral reforms are put into place.

"Be assured, the people are beginning to lose patience. The country is facing a crisis of confidence in the electoral process, that is now at its worst.

“If an election is called before any convincing improvements to the system are made, we vow to mobilise people to the streets,” he said.

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak’s government was severely admonished internationally following its high-handedness in handling the Coalition for Clean and Free and Fair Elections (Bersih 2.0) rally on July 9.

NONEBersih had led more than 50,000 people from across the nation to march the streets of the capital in their demand for electoral reform.

About 1,700 protesters were arrested in the rally which was marred by the police’s use of tear gas, water cannons and violence against the participants.

In what is seen by many as an attempt at damage-control by the government, following the public outcry over the crackdown on the Bersih rally, Najib announced the setting up of the parliamentary select committee (PSC) on electoral reforms.

However, critics have cautioned that this could be an smokescreen to ease public outrage as the prime minister has the ultimate say in when Parliament would be dissolved, and he had suggested that it could take place before the PSC completes its recommendations.

‘Cheating to stay in power’

Badrul said that sources close to the government had revealed that Najib intends to dissolve Parliament this month, although he has the mandate until May 2013.

“If elections are called in the near future before the PSC comes out with its decisions, it would definitely be the dirtiest election in history.

“If an election goes ahead despite the people’s resistance, the perception is that the election is held to legalise the ruling regime,” he said.

He insisted that a “serious reform process” is necessary to address the weaknesses in the present electoral system, and that the ruling party had to ensure that the any improvements made are not merely “cosmetic changes”.

Meanwhile, PAS’ organ Harakahdaily, quoting MCLM chair Haris Ibrahim (right) , also supported SAMM’s demands.

“We have received reliable information that the prime minister will dissolve Parliament on Nov 11 to allow the general election held on Dec 10.

"If true, we see this as a step again by Umno and BN to hold on to power, whether at the federal or state governments, by cheating,” said Haris.