

Bersih coalition reps placed in fuming fix

Malaysiakini.com

November 12 ,2011

by Aidila Razak

The Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (Bersih 2.0) steering committee members were not allowed to make submissions today under the coalition's name to the parliamentary select committee for electoral reform.

Instead, committee chairperson and Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation Maximus Ongkili (right) insisted that representatives speak as individuals and "not on behalf of Bersih, but can reflect its views".

He had repeatedly stressed this when the five members, including chairperson Ambiga Sreenevesan and steering committee member Maria Chin Abdullah (photo below), said that they were speaking for the banned coalition.

The minister was also questioned by committee member Azmin Ali (PKR-Gombak) for apparent double standards as he had yesterday allowed unregistered Human Rights Party to present their views in its name.

"This is a matter of consistency - you said Bersih 2.0 cannot be allowed as it is unregistered, although it is made up of about 60 registered NGOs," Azmin said.

Ongkili, who had initially asked the coalition's 96-page memorandum be amended to have the title Bersih 2.0 removed from its cover sheet, however, allowed almost two hours for all five representatives to present their views.

"You can register me whatever way you want but I am here to represent Bersih," Ambiga said, referring to the memorandum.

"Arguing on these semantics won't help either of us... You can scratch out the word Bersih 2.0 or tear out the cover sheet."

Speaking to reporters later, the Kota Marudu MP denied he was not "fearful" of Bersih, and claimed that he did not practice double standards.

"HRP was allowed as it came as a pro-tem committee, while Bersih 2.0 is a coalition," he said, noting that he was very generous with the time provided.

Bersih's key demands

Among others, the five Bersih leaders who donned yellow articles of clothing, called for:

- * Automatic registration, arguing that it does not require a change in the federal constitution.

- * Automatic removal of voters who have died from the electoral roll, and for the roll to be cleaned up before the next general election. Bersih 2.0 claims that they found about 1,000 people who had died still

on the roll.

* Those who register as voters to be included into the roll sooner than the present six months if there is no objection.

* Absentee voting for Malaysians overseas and those who are 250km away from their constituency on polling day, while postal votes are to be allowed only for Malaysians overseas who live far from the Malaysian High Commission in their respective countries.

* Constituencies should not cross boundaries of local authority and should not arbitrarily combine local communities and their borders should not arbitrarily partition local communities or cut across them.

* The EC be empowered to penalise those who engage in vote buying and other election offences.

* A 21-day campaign period.

Bersih 2.0 also called for a royal commission of inquiry on claims that foreigners are given citizenship in return for votes.

Like PAS Youth, which addressed the nine-person panel later today, it said that those who received citizenship in such alleged schemes would not want to risk their safety and citizenship unless they are protected under a royal commission.

Quoting National Registration Department statistics, committee member Anthony Loke (DAP-Rasah) said that 6,648 Indonesians were naturalised as Malaysian citizens in 2010, a jump from 1,654 the year before, and a huge leap from only 69 in 2005.

Speaking to reporters later, Ambiga said that Bersih needed at least another hour to present its findings. The two-day public hearing in Kuala Lumpur ended today.

However, Bersih leaders will be present at the other public hearings to continue pressing their case.

The PSC will hold hearings in Kota Kinabalu on Nov 25 and 26, Kuching on Dec 8 and 9, Penang on Dec 15 and 16, Kota Baru on Jan 7 and 8 and Johor Baru on Jan 12 and 13.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/181166>