

Gov't must walk the talk on EC reforms

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By Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir

Amanah welcomes the statement as reported on the front page of New Straits Times on April 5 that "Prime Minister Najib Razak said the government had nothing to hide as it was also all for fair and clean elections. We don't want to be elected on the basis of any irregularities or fraud in the election process".

NONThe newspaper quoted Najib as further saying, "At the end of the day, we want the process (election) to be seen in a positive light."

Najib also said that the government needed to take into account what the EC could do within the purview of the government and if it would need time to go through the proposals.

The above statement by the prime minister and taken in the context of the official policy to bring about political transformation in the country is most welcome.

However, the way the report of the parliamentary select committee (PSC) on Electoral Reform was tabled and approved in Parliament, without debate, and the way the minority report was thrown out, certainly and seriously questions the sincerity of the government.

No timelines for implementation

Furthermore, there are no timelines mentioned at all in the report as to when the various recommendations will be implemented and completed - if at all. This certainly raises great concern and worry among the people, and hence the justifiable talk of Bersih 3.0.

Amanah too is very concerned that two of its most important recommendations submitted to PSC at its meeting in Johor Baru have been given very little attention - if at all.

Amanah's two main proposals were:

1. To free the mainstream media: For about six months before the general election, at least, the mainstream media should be made "relatively free", if not freed altogether.

Malaysia seems to be the only country in the world which terms itself as a democracy despite 100 percent of its mainstream media being controlled by the ruling party. Can we call ourselves a democracy then? And can an election held under this situation be called "free and fair"?

This situation of our mainstream media can clearly be seen and felt by everybody in Malaysia and also by the international community. They can compare how free it is in Indonesia, Thailand and the Phillipines. Even Burma has now opened up and is giving opportunities to the Opposition to say its piece in the military junta's official mainstream media.

2. The "neutralising" of all government departments, semi-government departments, GLCs including the police and the military from blatantly campaigning for one side during the "countdown period" leading to the elections (say for about 6 months).

Again, no country in the world that calls itself a democracy when it uses all government departments, semi-government departments, GLCs and even the police and military as well to blatantly campaign for one side during the countdown period for the general election.

Stop the misuse of the people's money

This is happening all the time now. And since the "countdown period" for the election has already started, this practice should be stopped immediately. More so when it is using the people's money for this purpose.

Otherwise, there can never be a free and fair election and this would be easily known to the people of Malaysia and also the international community, which is watching us very closely.

Nevertheless, and in spite of the above, Amanah is very heartened with the assurances of the prime minister, as stated above.

Amanah feels that our proposals, together with the other recommendations made for clean and fair elections, can be implemented very easily and very fast and this will be all to the credit of the "political transformation" that has been announced.

Lastly, Amanah joins the other voices in the country to remind our leadership that the year is now 2012, a new era, and the rakyat certainly are insisting on "clean and fair" general elections.

This means the coming general election cannot be held until the PSC, election commission and the government have concluded their scrutiny of the various proposals presented to Parliament and implement them fully - including our two proposals as stated above.

God willing, we hope our appeal is duly and favourably considered by the government.

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