

## **Bersih to proceed with manifesto 'showdown'**

**MalaysiaKini.com**

**April 11, 2013**

**By Hazlan Zakaria**

Despite receiving no reply from caretaker Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak to its invitation, pro-electoral reform group Bersih will go ahead with a planned forum to pit the BN chairperson and his Pakatan Rakyat counterpart and their manifestos against each other.

"I tell you now, we will proceed," vowed Bersih co-chairperson S Ambiga at a press conference in Kuala Lumpur today.

To date, she said that Pakatan de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim has responded that he will take part in the forum, though Najib has not given an answer yet.

Ambiga clarified that to be fair, she only wrote to Najib and Anwar yesterday, although she had tweeted both a few days ago.

However, even if Najib decided not to attend and did not send a representative, Ambiga said that they will find a way for someone to deliver the BN manifesto during the forum.

Asked whether it was fair for someone not nominated by the BN to present their manifesto, Ambiga argued that this is the risk that Najib and his party runs if they refuse to take part.

However, she vowed that they will ensure that the process will be above board and as fair as can be.

Ambiga also said that the planned forum is not a debate but just a platform where the public can hear both sides. This is because she wants everyone to be comfortable with the format and be at their ease.

BN has been known to be averse to debate, with many of its leaders, especially Najib himself, all shunning such invitations to debate Pakatan leaders, bemoaning that such acts, common in more mature democracies, is not our culture.

The exception to this are forward-thinking and more open-minded young guns like Khairy Jamaluddin and Saifuddin Abdullah.

The showdown, she believes, is necessary to allow the rakyat to hear from both sides so that they can better judge prior to polling day come May 5.

Pakatan had launched its manifesto in February while BN did so last week, and leaders from both sides have been taking potshots and maligning each other over the manifestos through the media, though earnest debates on policy issues have been few and far between.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd  
Source: <http://www.malysiakini.com/news/226499>