

## **Royal commission more effective, says ex-EC chief**

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**By Nigel Aw**

Even though the oversight committee on the Election Commission is a welcome move, it will be better to have a royal commission to oversee the reform, says former EC chief Rashid Abdul Rahman.

He said "quick fixes" similar to the previous parliamentary select committee (PSC) on electoral reform are not workable in bringing real change.

abdul rashid abdul rahman "If you come up with suggestions like the previous one, it is not done in totality. A quick fix does not work.

"Any reform must be done in total, therefore the country should undertake a high-powered independent commission. Better still if it is a royal commission," Rashid (left) told Malaysiakini when contacted.

Rashid said a commission as suggested can review the EC in its entirety, including the election laws, and overhaul these where necessary.

"The commission should comprise legal experts, constitutional experts and electoral democracy experts.

"But if it is another committee comprising MPs again, that to me will not work," he said.

'Better to be under Parliament'

However, on whether the EC should come under the Prime Minister's Department, Parliament or should stand by itself, Rashid said it was a subject to debate.

NONE "But in major European countries, they all tend to put their EC under Parliament and even the appointment of its members is made by Parliament.

"There are plenty of advantages in doing so, as they can operate more freely and their actions can be questioned directly by Parliament," he said.

Rashid, who had served 17 years as EC secretary and almost 10 years as EC chief, had similarly called for the setting up of a royal commission of inquiry when the first PSC on electoral reform conducted its hearings and recommendations last

year.

Yesterday, national news agency Bernama reported Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak announcing a bi-partisan oversight committee for the EC, but Najib did not provide further details.

Meanwhile according to Bernama today, Second Finance Minister Ahmad Husni Hanadzlah (left) said the government's decision to shift its purview over the EC to a special committee comprising members of parliament from both sides of the divide is to ensure that the regulatory agency's credibility will no longer be questioned. He said the government felt it needed to duly effect this even though the 13th general election had just concluded in order to move on unhindered, towards progress.

"There were various perceptions on the credibility of the EC during the last general election which had influenced the minds of the people despite the commission's enhancement efforts," he told reporters at the Tambun parliamentary service centre in Ipoh.

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