

LETTER | On the Agong's decree to reconvene Parliament 'as soon as possible'

Malaysiakini

19 June 2021

G25 Malaysia

LETTER | With reference to the statement released by Istana Negara on June 16, we, G25 Malaysia, thank and support the decree of His Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong for the government to reconvene Parliament "secepat mungkin" (as soon as possible) to allow the Proclamation of Emergency, the Emergency Ordinances, and the National Recovery Plan to be debated and reviewed by members of Parliament for the sake of the nation's wellbeing.

We also thank and support the statement from the Conference of Rulers that calls for "agar Parlimen segera bersidang" (the Parliament to convene immediately). His Majesty's and Their Royal Highnesses' Royal decrees (titahs) are straightforward and clear: reconvening of Parliament is a matter of national urgency.

It is in the best interest of the government to heed His Majesty's decrees. Not only

will it show respect and understanding of His Majesty's role in advising the government during situations such as an emergency, it will also dispel any suspicion that the government may be delaying a Parliament sitting due to self-interest.

Through the parliamentary process, and with the transparency and accountability of ministers answering questions from the floor, there will be less cynicism and conspiracy theories from Malaysians and foreigners about the government's real intentions.

In addition, Clause (1) of Article 55(1) in our Constitution provides that His Majesty the Agong can summon a Parliament sitting and not allow six months to elapse between them.

The last Dewan Rakyat sitting was held last Dec 17, a little over six months ago. Delaying further after His Majesty's decree to reconvene Parliament is a clear violation of the rules in our Constitution, and of His Majesty's command. The government has no discretionary power on this matter.

There should be no problem reconvening Parliament now since all Members of Parliament (MPs) are already vaccinated, and the SOPs could be strictly enforced. Parliament could even sit in a hybrid manner, with MPs and officials present both

physically and virtually if it is deemed necessary for safety reasons.

There is no reason to wait until August when having a Parliament sitting now can help improve our situation quickly. In dealing with a crisis of this magnitude, which is unprecedented in our nation's history, all hands need to be on deck.

The members of Parliament, who are the voices of the people, need to be given the platform to voice out the concerns of the citizens and the expectations from their constituencies. This will give a better analysis and understanding of the problems on the ground which are being faced by the citizens and will lead to better solutions.

Parliament is seen internationally as the highest institution of governance in a democratic system of government. Its immediate reopening is therefore important to demonstrate to the world, in particular to the local business community as well as to foreign investors that our Constitution is functioning well.

This will strengthen investor confidence that Malaysia remains committed to the system of checks and balances to ensure a clean and responsible government.

In our petition released on June 6, which beseeched His Majesty the Yang di-

Pertuan Agong to advise the prime minister to reconvene Parliament with immediate effect, we reminded the government that, as constitutionally mandated by Clause (3) of Article 150, once an emergency is proclaimed, Parliament must be reconvened as soon as possible and the Emergency Proclamation and any Emergency Ordinance promulgated must be laid before Parliament for parliamentary scrutiny and approval.

The oversight role of Parliament over the executive during an emergency, as envisaged by Article 150, must be respected and, legally, cannot be ignored. The purpose of a parliamentary debate, apart from duly complying with constitutional requirements, is to allow for a thorough deliberation on pertinent national issues and to give credibility and validity to the government's plans and action programmes.

It is also to make the necessary adjustments and changes if there are constructive comments and criticisms from MPs, both from the ruling party and the opposition in the Dewan Rakyat and Dewan Negara.

Finally, a very important reason for reconvening Parliament immediately is to enable MPs to debate on the 12th Malaysia Plan (2021-25) as it contains the policy framework and the allocation of resources for national development.

The plan should have been tabled to Parliament by April at the latest in keeping with past practices. Although the Five-Year Plan is not statutory legislation, nevertheless, it is a document that all investors are anxiously waiting for so that they can see the policy direction for the future of the economy.

All Malaysians are also anxious to see whether, in the 12th Plan document, the government will adopt the Shared Prosperity Vision to emphasise that the distribution policy will now be based on needs, instead of race. This will set the country on the road towards becoming a progressive nation with economic justice for all, irrespective of race and religion.

G25 urges the government to respect and abide by His Majesty's and Their Royal Highnesses' wise and well-considered decrees in the interest of the nation and to reconvene Parliament with immediate effect.

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