

## **NGOs want more from PM's liberal policies**

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While praising him for introducing economic reforms in his hundred days in office, a coalition of NGOs urged Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak to also focus on democratic reforms to ensure sustainable growth.

They said his next hundred days should be devoted to the liberalization of the political process.

The ten-member coalition has put forward a ten-Key Performance Index (KPI) to help him push the democratization process ahead. The KPI was endorsed by 30 other civil bodies.

This was announced at a press conference held at the city center here today to convey the message to the premier on the eve of his hundred days in office.

In a press statement read out by NGOs, Gayathry Venkiteswaran, executive director of the Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ), said the Perak political crisis topped their list of stumbling blocks to the democratization process.

The only solution to this problem is fresh elections, they added.

The NGOs list also carried the police, the bench and prosecution, the electoral system and the Internal Security Act (ISA) for reform, among others.

"Rakyat is tired... (of the government) never delivering. These are our demands. We are now telling the government what we want done," said Harris Ibrahim representing the People's Parliament, an NGO.

Lim Teck Ghee from Centre for Policy Initiatives stressed that the recent economic liberalization that Najib has championed must go hand in hand with political progress.

"Economic think tanks in the world, Multinationals (MNCs), International bodies such as the World Bank have conducted extensive studies which reveal that economic progress cannot be sustained without political progress."

To sum up, Suaram coordinator, Tah Moon Hui added that he does not want to be in a situation where "we are free to make our money but not free to voice out our views."

Najib's hundredth day in office falls tomorrow which is July 11. In a clever play on the coincidence, the coalition carried posters that resembled the 7/11 retail outlet's logo but with the '7' turned into a question mark across which the question "Where is democracy?" runs.

Playing further on the 24-hour convenient store's slogan, the NGOs had added, "a question Malaysians are asking 24 hours a day".

"Reclaiming our constitution"

Among the proposals made by the NGOs are two royal commissions - one for electoral reforms and the other for parliamentary reform and two parliamentary select committees -

one for the judiciary and the prosecution and other for media law reform.

Another calls for the return of local government elections.

The main reason for the NGO move is to defend and reclaim public institutions on behalf of the people.

Haris also said that Najib must acknowledge that he is the prime minister today because of the failure of his predecessor, Abdullah Badawi who had promised similar reforms when in office.

He warned that the civil body will keep a close watch on Najib's performance to prevent a repeat of the Pak Lah era.

Suaram's Tah said that civil societies will continue to mount pressure on Najib to ensure that their demands are met.

He pointed out that on April 1 this year NGOs came together demanding that the prime minister implement reforms in the democracy arena.

"However, after hundred days of Najib as prime minister we still don't see any form of reform,"said Tah.

Regarding the ISA, Tan said the smaller number of detainees was of no consequence as it's still wrong even if only one person is detained without trial.

"Yes it is true that the ISA currently has 12 detainees, but some of them have been in there for more than six or eight years. How can a person be detained in a detention center without a trial for eight years? It's unreasonable." he said.

"The people have heard that the ISA has long been under review too many times but with no action taken so far. We wish that in the coming 100 days, the government will make an effort to review this," Tan added.

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