

GE Can Be Held Anytime, Not Bound By Committee On Electoral Reform
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KUALA LUMPUR -- Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak said that the next general election can be held anytime and is not bound by the works of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Electoral Reforms.

Najib said the government, however, would strive to implement any recommendation made by the committee before the coming election.

"We will try; there must be something that can be done immediately," he told a news conference after chairing the Umno Supreme Council meeting at Menara Dato' Onn here on Friday.

"What we can do immediately, we will do immediately," he added.

Najib, who is Umno president, said the committee, comprising representatives of political parties, would discuss and decide the types of improvements to be made to the electoral process.

Asked on the move by the opposition to wait for terms of reference before deciding on their participation in the committee, Najib said the committee was the government's sincere offer so that decisions can be made based on consensus.

"This is a sincere offer on our part because we need to have discussions across the aisle so that there will be a consensus," he said.

On the call by the opposition parties that the committee be headed by their representative, Najib said, it was impossible to accede to it because the committee must be headed by a leader from the majority party.

He also said that the request by the opposition for an equal representation in the committee could not be considered because the composition would depend on the strength of a party.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Mohamed Nazri Aziz announced on Wednesday that the cabinet had agreed to the setting up of the committee which would be responsible for strengthening the laws and regulations governing elections in the country.

It will comprise five Barisan Nasional members, three opposition members and an independent member.

Najib said the Umno Supreme Council had also agreed to the government's decision to set up the committee but said that this did not mean that it was an admission that there was a major weakness in the legitimacy of the country's elections.

He said the supreme council stressed that parliamentary democracy was a key principle in Umno's struggle all this while.

"The legitimacy of the electoral process should not be questioned because we have proven that there were no manipulation done either in terms of the ballots or the electoral roll," he said.

On claims made by the opposition that people with permanent resident status being listed as electors within a short period, Najib said the Election Commission should provide explanation on the matter in view of attempts by the opposition to highlight it.

(Bernama)

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