

Will The PSC On Electoral Reforms Be Stillborn With Another Najib Flip Flop?
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In just four days, the Prime Minister Najib Razak has done a full flip-flop, reneging on his implicit undertaking on Monday night that the next general elections would not be held until the Parliamentary Select Committee on electoral reforms has reached a national consensus on electoral reforms.

Let me quote from Bernama on Najib's announcement on Monday night:

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak announced Monday, Aug 15 the setting up of a parliamentary select committee on electoral reforms to put to rest any suspicion that there is manipulation by the government in the country's electoral process.

The prime minister said the committee, comprising government and opposition members, would have its first meeting on Wednesday and would discuss "everything that needs to be done" and reach a consensus on the matter.

"This is so that we can reach a consensus in facing the next election without any suspicion about any manipulation by the government.

"That is why when the issue of free and fair elections was raised recently, the government's response was for us to tackle the issue which has spawned numerous views, and to a certain extent, disputes," he said in his speech at the breaking-of-the-fast with the media hosted by Bernama at Wisma Bernama, here.

He said the move was to dispel any misconception that the government was against a clean electoral process.

Najib said the government was committed to continuing the parliamentary democracy tradition that was started by the nation's forefathers.

"I have said it before and I say it again, that the cabinet members and I do not want to become ministers and prime minister without the support of the people. We will only form the government if it is proven that the people truly choose the Barisan Nasional as their government.

"Let no one misconstrue and say that we do not want a clean process to elect the government," he said.

Last night, Najib reneged on his commitment on the formation of the parliamentary select committee to "reach a consensus in facing the next election without any suspicion about any manipulation by the government" when he stated that the next general election can be held anytime and is not bound by the work of the parliamentary select committee.

In declaring that the next general election can be held anytime and is not bound by the work of the parliamentary select committee on electoral reforms, Najib is in effect saying that the Barisan Nasional government is now prepared to go ahead with the next general election although it has failed to put to rest suspicions of manipulation by the government in the country's electoral process.

This has vindicated the intense questioning and doubts about the true intentions of the parliamentary select committee proposal, whether it is a genuine and sincere attempt to address and resolve the many flaws in the electoral system or just a gimmick to sidetrack legitimate and growing public demands for electoral reforms.

This is the why so much questions have been raised about the Parliamentary Select Committee proposal, in particular why Pakatan Rakyat parties had not been consulted and agreement sought on the formation of the parliamentary select committee, its membership, terms of reference, time-line and other aspects and whether the Prime Minister could give an iron-clad guarantee that the next general elections would

not be held until the recommendations of the parliamentary select committee have been fully implemented.

Malaysians are asking whether Najib has backed down in four days from his implicit undertaking that the parliamentary select committee would be a meaningful exercise and that general elections would only be held after electoral reforms had been effected because of the hardline pressures such as those emanating from the Deputy Prime Minister, Muhyiddin Yassin who had denied that there is any real problem with the electoral system and that only some minor tweaks are required.

Be that as it may, it is now in the court of the Prime Minister as to whether his proposal of a parliamentary select committee will be stillborn because of his refusal to fully consult with and seek the agreement of Pakatan Rakyat on various important aspects of the committee as well to assure all Malaysians that it will be a meaningful exercise and not a political ploy to avoid electoral reforms.

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