

Najib faces second rally threat

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By Melissa Chi

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 6 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak is now facing the threat of a second major street protest if electoral reforms are not implemented before the polls, an outcome that could derail his plans to regain a two-thirds majority in Parliament.

Solidariti Anak Muda Malaysia (SAMM) and Malaysian Civil Liberties Movement (MCLM) threatened the prime minister yesterday with a protest ala Bersih 2.0's July 9 rally if polls are called before reforms are implemented.

Several Pakatan Rakyat (PR) lawmakers expressed their support today for the proposal and vowed to hold Najib to his promises.

They said the prime minister must allow the parliamentary select committee (PSC) he had formed to complete its six-month probe into the country's election process and implement its reform recommendations before calling the 13th general election.

PKR vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar told The Malaysia Insider today that PKR will lend its support to another such protest if there is a need for it.

"I believe the rakyat are awaiting the proof of the pie from the pledges of reform made by the PM on September 14 this year.

"Hence, at the bare minimum, the GE (general election) must be held post PSC for work on and implementation of much needed electoral reforms, some of which can immediately be implemented (such as the) use of indelible ink, automatic voter registration and longer campaigning period," she said via SMS.

"Since these issues remain relevant to Bersih 2.0's struggle, then there's much necessity to have a third wave," Nurul Izzah added.

Najib and his reformist image suffered in the wake of strong condemnation from the international media when his administration ordered a widespread clampdown on Bersih 2.0's July 9 protest.

The election watchdog had rallied thousands to the streets of the capital in a march for free and fair elections, an event said to have strengthened the country's civil society movement significantly.

The Bersih 2.0 rally on July 9 drew thousands to the capital's streets. — file pic
Najib mooted the formation of the PSC shortly after the July 9 protest this year, Bersih 2.0's second, promising to look into Bersih 2.0's demands.

The PSC will, however, be dissolved along with Parliament if polls are called before its six-month probe is completed.

The move, along with the subsequent decision to repeal the Internal Security Act, relax security and press laws and promise increased civil liberties, was seen as the administration's attempt to recoup its losses after a backlash from July 9.

PAS election director Dr Mohd Hatta Ramli also said PAS will back PR's stand to ensure the next elections will be called after electoral reforms are carried out.

"As far as political parties are concerned, no election should be carried out before the reforms (are implemented). So if the two groups feel that we have been short-changed, there will be big support probably, Pakatan Rakyat will consider supporting it because we have made that clear," he said.

This protest could derail Barisan Nasional's (BN) plans to recapture its coveted two-third majority which Najib desperately needs.

DAP's Anthony Loke, however, said that he will try to push as hard as possible through the PSC for electoral reforms, before resorting to another protest.

"At this point in time, we are looking at options but we trying to push through the PSC.

"If that (general election) happens, we have to make a decision then. We can't pre-empt it but now, we are looking forward to the next meeting on Thursday," he said.

PKR's Chua Tian Chang also said it is too early to say whether another massive street protest is needed at this point in time.

"I don't want to pre-empt anything at this moment but people's expectations are high and they will not take the 'no reform' point as an answer," he said.

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