

Bersih says 'immediate' polls reform possible by March next year
The Malaysian Insider
August 16, 2011
By Shazwan Mustafa Kamal

PETALING JAYA, Aug 16 — Bersih 2.0 disputes a deputy Speaker's prediction that electoral reforms will take at least a year, instead it issued a list of "immediate" reforms possible by March 2012.

Dewan Rakyat Deputy Speaker Datuk Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar said earlier today that it would take a year before the parliamentary committee concluded its discussions, and told The Malaysian Insider that "it is a matter of great importance to public interest" and that it involved all stakeholders including Bersih, NGOs and the Bar Council.

In response, Bersih suggested today that the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) present two reports- the first one on immediate reforms (to be released by March next year) and a second report on long-term reforms (to be released within a year after the PSC's formation).

"You don't need a year to conclude discussions. We suggest that two reports be prepared — the first report is immediate, as there are immediate reforms you can recommend by March next year," Bersih steering committee member Maria Chin Abdullah told reporters here.

Recommendations in the first report, according to Maria, should include reforms like automatic voter registration via synchronisation of the Election Commission (EC) and the National Registration Department (NRD) to ensure 3.7 million unregistered voters are "enfranchised" before the next general elections.

She stated that the first round of reform recommendations by the PSC should also include reduction of voting eligibility age from 21 to 18, reform of postal/absentee voting, implementation of indelible ink and clear guidelines/minimum of campaigning period of 21 days.

"The proposal for the first report must be completed and implemented before any elections can take place," she said.

With speculation that Datuk Seri Najib Razak will call snap elections soon, there are concerns that the parliamentary panel would only present its findings after the next national polls.

The Umno president has also delayed party polls that was due in April this year but the party's constitution requires that it can only be delayed by 18 months, which is in October next year — exactly when Wan Junaidi believes the PSC will begin wrapping up.

"The prime minister has to make sure that polls are not held until this (reforms) are done. Clear it up before elections are held.

"It would be pointless for a select committee if elections are held before the committee can conclude its discussions or present its reports," said another committee member Dr Wong Chin Huat.

Copyright © 2011 The Malaysian Insider

Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/odds-against-betting-for-education-fund-winning-chinese-votes/>