

Deputy Speaker: Polls reform panel hearings likely to take a year
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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 16 — Dewan Rakyat Deputy Speaker Datuk Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar has poured cold water on hopes that the Najib administration's parliamentary select committee (PSC) on electoral reforms can quickly draw up recommendations, stating instead that it would take a year before it concludes discussions.

He told The Malaysian Insider that "it is a matter of great importance to public interest. It is best we discuss it in-depth and involve all stakeholders including Bersih, NGOs, the Bar Council and civil society and also hold a public inquiry."

With speculation that Datuk Seri Najib Razak will call snap elections soon, Wan Junaidi's (picture) comments today could mean 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.

Wan Junaidi also said that with Hari Raya falling next month, it was best to form the PSC during the October Budget session.

"There is just two weeks left before Aidilfitri. We have no time," he said, adding that it was "illogical" to rush things as Parliament will sit again on October 3.

According to the Standing Orders, a select committee can only be formed by a motion while Parliament is in session.

Wan Junaidi said "a motion to hold an emergency sitting must be tabled two weeks in advance and then we need a week to arrange for the meeting, so it will take three weeks."

With Hari Raya at the end of the month, and Parliament meeting soon after that, he said that "I don't see the logic and rationale of calling an emergency sitting."

Tens of thousands took to the streets to support Bersih's July 9 rally for clean and fair elections in defiance of warnings of police action, which finally resulted in nearly 1,700 arrests, scores injured and one ex-soldier dead.

The government crackdown led to international criticism and a group of Malaysians even protested when Najib visited London, a rare experience for any Malaysian prime minister abroad.

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