

Pakatan mulls boycott of electoral reforms panel
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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 18 — The federal opposition may not participate in Datuk Seri Najib Razak's parliamentary select committee (PSC) on electoral reforms if it does not meet its expectations.

After the prime minister said last night that his decision to form the panel was to "satisfy" the opposition, Pakatan Rakyat (PR) lawmakers have told The Malaysian Insider that the administration has so far "ridden roughshod" over the public's demands for electoral reforms by proceeding with the panel without consulting other parties.

"In fact, we don't even know what are the terms of reference. It could be so narrow that nothing of substance is discussed," PKR deputy president Azmin Ali (picture) said.

The Gombak MP added that the opposition pact "will decide based on the terms of reference whether we should participate."

DAP parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang also said that Najib's statement last night only brought further doubts over the credibility of the committee, which will see Barisan Nasional (BN) MPs making up five of its nine members.

"Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein's statement yesterday that claims of foreign voters will be answered in the PSC shows that the government will not 'face' the PSC but pass the buck to it instead," the Ipoh Timur MP said.

He was referring to the home minister's announcement that the Election Commission and National Registration Department would co-operate to check on opposition claims — that Hishammuddin said he "believes to be baseless" — that 1,600 permanent residents have been given citizenship and the right to vote.

"There has been zero consultation with PR over what he calls a bipartisan committee. He is riding roughshod over demands of electoral reforms to implement what appears to be nothing more than a political ploy," the DAP stalwart added.

The prime minister raised eyebrows on Monday when he announced the formation of the PSC, a key demand in electoral reform movement Bersih 2.0's agenda.

Najib and his administration's reformist image took a beating in the international media after the authorities embarked on a widespread clampdown before and during the July 9 Bersih rally, resulting in nearly 1,700 arrests and the use of water cannons and tear gas to break up a largely peaceful protest.

With his sudden decision to introduce reforms, sources in the prime minister's camp say that Najib now realises the folly of a sledgehammer approach — one which has tarnished his aim of being seen as a moderate and a reformer, and has caused him to lose the support of middle Malaysia.

Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/pakatan-mulls-boycott-of-electoral-reforms-panel/>