

PAS wants electoral reform plan extended beyond Parliament
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 19 — PAS wants the government to take its electoral reform plan beyond Parliament, suggesting today the formation of a special committee that could include non-partisan members like ex-judges or civil society representatives.

Its information chief Datuk Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man said the committee should be answerable to either Parliament or the Yang di-Pertuan Agong himself, to ensure its recommendations affect changes to the electoral process.

"If membership is only limited to elected representatives, then the civil society movement will not have any right to suggest reforms.

"It is most important that this committee has the blessings of the people ... so it would be better if non-governmental organisations, independent civil society groups and non-partisan members, like former judges or Suhakam representatives, were included," he told The Malaysian Insider today.

Tuan Ibrahim pointed out that if the Najib administration goes ahead with the formation of its parliamentary select committee, instead of a non-partisan special polls committee, it would only prove its insincerity in its promise to study electoral reforms.

"This non-partisan committee must be under the purview of either Parliament or the Agong so that once it decides on its recommendations, Parliament must be the one to endorse it. This is to ensure that its suggestions carry some weight," he said.

In his statement carried on Harakah Daily's website today, Tuan Ibrahim suggested that the non-partisan committee, to be named the "Electoral Reforms Special Committee", should include 12 members — three political party leaders from Barisan Nasional (BN), three from Pakatan Rakyat (PR), three from NGOs, one representative from the Election Commission (EC) and one from the National Registration Department.

For the chairman post, which PR and BN is presently bickering over, Tuan Ibrahim said an individual well-accepted by the community like a representative from Bersih 2.0 or Suhakam should be appointed.

"The committee must also be given a fixed deadline, at least three to six months, to complete its recommendations, which will be debated and passed in Parliament.

"Its primary focus is to improve and return public confidence to the country's electoral process," he said.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak raised eyebrows earlier this week when he announced the formation of a parliamentary select committee to study electoral reforms, a key demand of Bersih 2.0.

While PR had at first lauded the announcement, its leaders have since grown increasingly doubtful over the administration's sincerity to introduce reforms, particularly after the prime minister said the panel was formed to "satisfy" the opposition.

Responding to PR's demand to chair the committee yesterday, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department in charge of parliamentary affairs Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Aziz said such committees were commonly led by federal ministers, adding "no means no".

The committee, to be formed in October, will comprise five BN representatives, including one chairman, three from PR and one independent MP.

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