

Salahuddin wants Najib's guarantee for reforms first, polls later
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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 23 — PAS vice-president Salahuddin Ayub wants Datuk Seri Najib Razak to promise not to call a general election before a parliamentary select committee (PSC) deliberates and recommends reforms that have been the subject of two mass rallies in the past four years.

He also said the Islamist party would boycott the bipartisan panel if the prime minister refuses to make the pledge.

"PAS wants a concrete answer and a guarantee from Najib that the 13th general election will only be held after carrying out the reforms determined by this special panel," Salahuddin (picture) told The Malaysian Insider today.

"Will Parliament not be dissolved before the panel finishes its work? Will these suggestions for reform be implemented in the 13th general election? If there is no guarantee (from Najib), then this panel is meaningless," said the Kubang Kerian MP.

Salahuddin said the panel's framework on electoral reform movement Bersih 2.0's eight-point demands was not important.

"What's important is that Najib must be bold enough to say that this panel will execute suggestions for improvement," he pointed out.

The PAS lawmaker said there could be negotiations over those reforms that could not be carried out in the coming polls because the federal constitution needed to be amended.

Najib said recently that the date of federal polls — speculated to be held within a year — was the government's prerogative and did not depend on the panel's proceedings.

Activists and Malaysians who joined the Bersih rally on July 9 for free and fair elections have dubbed the panel an insincere public relations exercise by Najib.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz said yesterday that the panel would meet for six months and he would bring a motion to form the panel on October 3, the first day of the next Parliament sitting, subject to Cabinet approval.

The six-month time frame would allow the select committee to submit its findings a year before Najib's mandate expires in April 2013.

Crucially, it also gives the Umno president a six-month window before potentially fractious Umno party polls, already delayed from April this year, must be held.

The PM made a major concession to Bersih when he announced the PSC last week.

It came some five weeks after tens of thousands braved tear gas and water cannons at the July 9 Bersih rally in the capital.

PAS deputy president Mohamad Sabu said recently that Pakatan Rakyat (PR) will decide tomorrow on whether to join the bipartisan panel.

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