

## **Is The Opposition Sincere About Joining PSC?**

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 15 (Bernama) -- The sincerity of the opposition in joining the parliamentary select committee (PSC) on electoral reforms is continually questioned, in fact, many sees the coalition as playing a tug-of-war on the matter.

Not only that they refuse to confirm their participation in PSC, despite having been invited by the government, they have also set conditions which they want the government and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak to follow.

Even before the setting of PSC, numerous assumptions, allegations and accusations had been thrown against the government that, ostensibly, the committee was just a Barisan Nasional (BN) trick.

The prime minister had stressed that the PSC was aimed at addressing concerns raised over the country's electoral system.

The committee will be headed by a minister and comprising nine members of parliament -- five from the government, three from the opposition and an independent member.

The five conditions set by the opposition are that the government must accept the eight demands of the Coalition of Clean and Fair Elections (Bersih) and urging the Election Commission to implement demands that are under their jurisdiction, that the election date must be set based on consensus between the government and opposition, that ample room is given for the PSC to carry out its duties, that the issue of citizenship to foreign nationals be included as an agenda for discussion, and that every decision of the PSC should be implemented.

Some political observers are of the opinion that the demands of the opposition are akin to the Malay proverb, "beri betis hendak paha" (Given the calf but coveting the thigh too).

The government has, all this while, been the one which decides when to dissolve parliament to pave the way for a general election.

Setiawangsa MP Datuk Seri Zulhasnan Rafique of BN, said the opposition should be sincere and regard the setting up of the PSC as beneficial to the nation and the people.

"We invite the opposition MPs to join so they can give specific views and, in this manner, the parliament could, in the future, decide on other demands by the opposition.

"This is something good for our country and people. I think we should give full cooperation to the PSC," he told Bernama.

Opposition leaders have been taking part in PSCs in the past. One of them is DAP deputy chairman, who is Kepong MP, Dr Tan Seng Giaw.

Dr Tan said issues raised were taken seriously by the PSC and there were actions implemented in connection with the decisions made by the committee.

"We discuss issues in great detail in the PSC and this is followed up with reports for the government to take action," he told Bernama, dismissing as untrue if one is to say that the committee brings little benefit.

Political analyst Prof Dr Ahmad Atory Hussain described the opposition's attitude towards the committee as childish.

"It might have never crossed their mind that the government would want set up a committee to reform the electoral system. Now that the government had done so, they are beginning to feel apprehensive about it.

"They are exhibiting childish politics by imposing these conditions," he said.

The Universiti Sains Malaysia's social science lecturer said the opposition's refusal to decide whether to join the PSC or otherwise, might have been due to the realisation that they would not be able to prove the allegations they made against the government.

"It will then be embarrassing to them," he said.

Ahmad Atory also said the PSC could most probably become a permanent committee like the Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

"If they are serious and want to talk about the election, then they should join the PSC and not resorting to setting conditions and making noise," he said.

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