

Science minister to head electoral reform panel
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PUTRAJAYA, Sept 22 — Datuk Seri Maximus Ongkili was named to head the parliamentary select committee (PSC) on electoral reform.

Besides the Science, Technology and Innovation minister, the other Barisan Nasional (BN) MPs will be Datuk Alexander Linggi, Datuk Seri Radzi Sheikh Ahmad, Tan Sri Fong Chan Onn and P Kamalanathan.

Their names were announced today by Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

After initially objecting to the PSC, Pakatan Rakyat (PR) also accepted yesterday Putrajaya's invitation to join the PSC.

PR has not yet named their three MPs in the PSC, which will sit when the Dewan Rakyat convenes next month.

The federal opposition had earlier mulled boycotting the panel mooted by Datuk Seri Najib Razak, expressing doubt over Putrajaya's sincerity to reform the election process.

DAP parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang had also said Najib's admission that forming the panel was merely to "satisfy the opposition" only raised further doubts over the credibility of the committee.

The prime minister raised eyebrows 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 cannon 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 cost him the support of middle Malaysia.

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