

**Putrajaya keeps Bersih out in cold despite reforms embrace**  
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**By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 3 — Putrajaya has refused to lift its ban on Bersih 2.0 despite promising to implement its electoral reform demands, insisting today the coalition had attempted to “topple the government”.

In a written reply to Fong Po Kuan (DAP – Batu Gajah) today, Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein charged that the 62-member election watchdog group had created unrest and fears among Malaysians while tarnishing the country’s image.

He previously declared Bersih 2.0 an illegal organisation according to Section 5 of the Societies Act 1966.

“(Bersih 2.0) spread propaganda to incite the people for the purpose of toppling the government by distributing certain leaflets.

“Its activities tarnished the country’s image and even threatened public peace, safety, economic prosperity and state sovereignty, apart from affecting the harmony of this multiracial society,” he said.

As such, Hishammuddin said Bersih 2.0 would remain an illegal organisation.

“On the formation of the parliamentary select committee (PSC) for electoral reforms, as YB (Yang Berhormat) is aware, it has already been formed,” he said.

Parliament agreed today to form the bipartisan select committee on electoral reforms promised by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak following the tumultuous Bersih 2.0 rally in the streets of the capital.

The Umno president has since gone to great lengths to try and win back middle Malaysia after international condemnation of the clampdown on the July 9 Bersih rally, during which police arrested nearly 1,700 and fired tear gas and water cannon to disperse tens of thousands of demonstrators calling for free and fair elections.

In the wake of the rally, Najib promised to reform the country’s election process, a key demand of Bersih 2.0, before going on to announce sweeping changes to security and press laws, a move he said was to increase civil liberties in the country.

Bersih 2.0 chairman Datuk Ambiga Sreenivasan responded by calling for Putrajaya to lift its ban on the movement, saying it would be in line with Najib’s democratic reforms.

She told reporters after being given leave by the High Court here recently to challenge the ban that “this would be the easiest way” to solve the matter.

She added, however, that revoking the July 1 ban would mean “not wasting time in working to be the best democracy in the world”, referring to Najib’s stated objective in announcing the Malaysia Day reforms.

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