

**Bersih says PSC a farce if elections before reforms**  
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**By Melissa Chi**

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 4 — Outlawed electoral reform group Bersih 2.0 reiterated today its demand for the next general elections to be called only after reforms have been implemented.

“These kind of demands can actually be implemented and they should be implemented even before any elections can be called. Otherwise then don’t form the PSC, it is a farce.

“We iterate that any move towards electoral reform by the government is insincere and deceitful if the eight immediate demands by Bersih 2.0 are not implemented before the 13th general elections,” Maria Chin Abdullah (picture), one of Bersih’s steering committee members told reporters here in Parliament.

She urged Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak to give Malaysians his word that the 13th general elections will not be held before the recommendations from the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) are implemented.

Parliament agreed yesterday to form a bipartisan select committee on electoral reforms, despite Putrajaya’s continued refusal to guarantee that elections will not be held until the panel’s recommendations are implemented.

Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Aziz had said that the select committee was formed to suggest improvements to the electoral system and there was no need to set a deadline for it.

He later said the six-month timeframe given to the PSC was reasonable and would give its members sufficient time to implement reforms.

The Padang Rengas MP also defended the PSC’s terms of reference, saying it had been widened past Bersih 2.0’s eight demands to encompass all issues that would guarantee free and fair elections.

Bersih’s demands are to clean up the electoral roll, reform postal voting, use indelible ink, allow free and fair access to the media, extend the campaign period to 21 days, strengthen public institutions and to stop corruption and dirty politics.

When asked if the prime minister goes ahead to call for elections before any reforms are implemented, Maria said it will depends on the rakyat, what the next course of action is.

“That will really depends on the rakyat because that will actually be ignoring the 50,000 that turned up on 9 July and if you still have the elections before any reforms, I think the rakyat will give them a stronger message.

Dr Wong Chin Huat, also another steering committee member said there will be a Bersih 3.0 in various form.

"That we may not know. It may turn out to be a greater tsunami," he said, referring to the term coined in 12th general elections on March 8, 2008 where Barisan Nasional won just 51 per cent of the votes, and 63 per cent of parliamentary seats.

It was the ruling coalition's worst performance ever in Malaysia's 50 years of independence, and crucially, for the first time since 1969, the BN lost the two-thirds majority in Parliament it needs to amend the constitution.

Equities research firm Nomura had released a report in July saying an estimated increase of 3.2 million new voters by the first quarter of 2013 could make the outcome of the next general election highly unpredictable.

The research house said that when combined with the 2.58 million registered voters who did not turn up at the 2008 elections, the increase in voters could reach 9.43 million.

The huge increase in new voters was very significant, Nomura said, and likely to intensify competition, given the narrow margin of victory of the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition in 2008 of a mere 384,688 votes.

"It is pertinent that PSC holds public hearing at every state including Sabah and Sarawak to collect evidence and views from all Malaysians... and conduct consultations with civil society organisations including Bersih 2.0.

"Although the PSC is now formed, Bersih 2.0 would like to repeat our call for a Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) on electoral reforms to study larger issues of elections and democracy such as electoral system, a full review of all electoral laws and the membership of the Election commission," Maria said.

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