

**EC cared for reform before Bersih, says Nazri**  
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**By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 6 — Putrajaya claimed Bersih 2.0's electoral reform demands were "old issues" and have always been on the Election Commission's (EC) radar.

In a written response in Parliament to Karpal Singh (DAP-Bukit Gelugor), Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Aziz today insisted the issues were often debated in both the Dewan Rakyat and Dewan Negara by elected representatives.

"Even without their demands, these issues are old ones and have always been the EC's focus when exercising its responsibilities, not merely to clean (the election process) but also to empower and to re-engineer the management and operations of the election system," he said.

He added the EC has always focussed on improving its operations in order to strengthen the election process and democracy in Malaysia.

However, added the Padang Rengas MP, any effort to affect changes in the election process must be in accordance with the Federal Constitution.

"These (Bersih 2.0) demands, the EC has taken into consideration to study and carry out according to time availability and its ability," he said.

Parliament approved the formation of a parliamentary select committee for electoral reforms on Monday, a first major move by the Najib administration to look into changes to the election system, a key demand of Bersih 2.0.

The panel comprises nine members, including includes five Barisan Nasional (BN) lawmakers, three from Pakatan Rakyat (PR) and one independent MP.

BN's MPs include chairman Datuk Seri Maximus Ongkili, Datuk Alexander Linggi, Datuk Seri Radzi Sheikh Ahmad, Tan Sri Fong Chan Onn and P Kamalanathan while PR's MPs are Azmin Ali, Anthony Loke and Dr Hatta Ramli. Wangsa Maju MP Wee Choo Keong is the sole independent lawmaker in the PSC.

The panel has been given six months to prepare its recommendations, which the government has said must be implemented by the EC.

In an announcement yesterday, Ongkili said civil society groups and any individual would be allowed to submit their proposals on electoral reforms to the panel.

However, the minister said only "legally registered" groups would be allowed to table their proposals, acknowledging that Bersih 2.0 was still considered an outlawed organisation.

Putrajaya announced on Monday that Bersih 2.0 would remain illegal despite pledging to incorporate the group's suggestions on electoral reforms, claiming it had attempted to topple the government and spread public unrest.

Ongkili also listed four key concerns the committee will deliberate on, including election

laws, regulations and rules; the election process proper such as voting, vote-tallying, campaign periods and the use of election agents; the electoral roll; and election institutions such as the Election Commission (EC).

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak raised eyebrows recently 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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