

Electoral reform: Don't use delay tactic, says Bersih
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PETALING JAYA (Sept 9, 2011): The cabinet's decision to widen the scope of the Parliamentary Select Committee's (PSC) framework on electoral reform to include other measures than the eight core demands by NGOs should not be a form of delay tactic.

The Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (Bersih 2.0) steering committee member Maria Chin Abdullah said that while the coalition welcomed the announcement, other short term measures must be immediately implemented.

"Bersih wants at least four demands such as longer campaign period, the use of indelible ink, free access to the media and cleaning the electoral roll to be implemented first.

"They (PSC) can look into broader issues but if that's going to be the focus of the (committee) then I think it's just a form of delay tactics," Maria told theSun yesterday.

She added that the four demands do not require constitutional amendments, thus it can be implemented as soon as possible. "The government must have the courage to have these demands in place or else it defeats the purpose of wanting electoral reforms."

The other four demands made by Bersih are: to strengthen public institutions; stop corruption; stop dirty politics; and reform postal votes.

PKR vice-president Tian Chua said the government should carry out some of the reforms immediately. "Electoral reforms can be discussed in the long term, that is not the problem; the focus now should be what can be done before the next general election because we want the Election Commission to ensure it is clean and fair.

"You can come up with new suggestions but you cannot run from the fact that you have a problematic electoral roll," he said.

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said that the PSC will be a "futile" exercise unless the government can guarantee that polls won't be held until its proposals were implemented.

"No matter what is the framework, for the findings to have any significance, the parliament cannot be dissolved until poll reforms are conducted," he said.

Tian said PKR has not decided if it will take part in the PSC yet. "What's the whole point in taking part if Parliament will be dissolved soon, then the PSC is merely a window dressing. Unless there is some form of guarantee, otherwise it's a waste of time," he added.