

PKR: PM must pledge polls committee concludes before election held
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PETALING JAYA, Aug 16 — The prime minister must give his assurance that he will not call snap polls before the parliamentary select committee on electoral reform has done its job if he is sincere about having clean elections, PKR has said.

PKR central leadership council member Elizabeth Wong (picture) said without such a guarantee, Datuk Seri Najib Razak's decision to form the select committee amounts to little more than a "red herring" and "smokescreen" given the considerable time it will take to study the system.

She pointed out that, based on the Selangor government's experience with its Freedom of Information (FOI) select committee, the proposed parliamentary committee will need "a minimum of more than one year" to look into the existing system's weaknesses and propose relevant changes.

"If he (Najib) is really sincere... he has to give us a commitment that a general election will not be held until the select committee has finished their job, they have already presented the report to Parliament and the reforms are in place," Wong told reporters at PKR headquarters here today.

Wanita PKR chief Zuraida Kamaruddin added that until then Najib must also put a stop to the 6P programme for illegal immigrants, given allegations that the amnesty drive has been used by Barisan Nasional (BN) to pad the electoral roll with voters sympathetic to the ruling coalition.

Najib announced yesterday that a bipartisan parliamentary select committee will be formed "as soon as possible" to examine the current electoral system, a key demand of the Bersih July 9 rally.

His announcement was seen as a major concession acknowledging the political fallout from his administration's harsh clampdown on the rally for free and fair elections.

The Najib administration was roundly criticised in the international media, with his reformist image taking a major hit after authorities took extreme measures including firing tear gas and water cannons at largely peaceful demonstrators.

The prime minister's decision also suggests he was forced to give space to Bersih and its iconic leader Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan as the government has been floundering since last month's rally.

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