

**Najib says electoral reform move to 'satisfy' opposition**  
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**By Clara Chooi**

KAPAR, Aug 17 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak played the role of good cop tonight when explaining to voters here his decision to introduce electoral reforms, saying he had done so to "satisfy" the opposition despite their participation in the illegal July 9 rally.

"We will improve the (election) process if it is disputed.

"We don't dispute it but to satisfy them, then we will implement the changes to improve the system.

"We want whoever rules this country to be elected according to the true wishes of the people," he told a large crowd gathered for a buka puasa function at Pangsapuri Seri Perantau, an 11-block row of low-cost flats built by the Selangor State Development Corporation (PKNS).

The prime minister, however, continued to put down the rally, saying in the administration of any country, street demonstrations should not be permitted as they could result in riots.

Najib made specific reference to the London riots, saying he could empathise with his British counterpart David Cameron, whom he said had reportedly described the current UK society as "sick".

"We cannot just allow street demonstrations to happen because perhaps 80 per cent of those gathered have good intentions but who can guarantee that there will not be the remaining 10 or 20 per cent of those who are just opportunists and attempt to start riots, or begin looting, breaking in to steal items like TV sets, or set buildings on fire ... we could have a riot on our hands in the blink of an eye," he said.

Najib stressed that his administration's prohibition of the street rally had not meant that the government was not in support of a clean and fair election process.

He insisted there were other ways and means for groups to take up their grouses with the administration, without resorting to riots.

As an example, the prime minister repeated his contention that the government had been prepared to offer Bersih 2.0 a stadium to stage its rally.

"And yesterday, you read that I made a commitment to form a parliamentary select committee comprising members from both Pakatan Rakyat (PR) and Barisan Nasional. This clearly mirrors the government's sincerity," he said.

Najib added, however, that the surprise measure did not mean an admission on his part that allegations the current electoral process was skewed were true.

"It is not an admission of this. If the election process is skewed, we would not have surrendered Selangor to PR.

"We did lose the last time but it is only to loan it to PR for a short while before we take it back," he said, triggering applause.

The prime minister raised eyebrows yesterday when he announced the formation of a committee to look into electoral reforms, a key demand in 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 rally, resulting in nearly 1,700 arrests and the use of water cannons 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 caused him to lose the support of middle Malaysia.

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