

EC: Electoral reform process to conclude at PSC meet tomorrow
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 13 — The Election Commission (EC) expects to resolve all outstanding electoral reform issues during its final meeting with the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) tomorrow, and end months of public discontent shown against the country's election process.

The panel, which was mooted shortly after Bersih 2.0's protest turned chaotic on the city's streets here last July, only has three more weeks to compile its findings before its six-month term expires this month-end.

"Tomorrow will be our final session with the PSC. It will be a very complete session because we must tie up all loose ends before the PSC tables its findings in Parliament," EC deputy director Datuk Wan Ahmad Wan Omar told The Malaysian Insider today.

He said the EC plans to update the PSC on all the panel's recommendations thus far, key among which is the implementation of overseas voting for all Malaysians residing abroad.

Wan Ahmad (picture) would not reveal if the EC has formulated a method on how to carry out the proposal but said the PSC would be informed on what "we can and cannot do".

"I am sure they (PSC) will raise this subject tomorrow. Let's see what they have to say.

"And we will explain what we can and cannot do and the problems we face," he said.

During the PSC's meeting last week, EC representatives present were told to submit a mechanism on how to implement overseas voting before the panel prepares its final report for Parliament before April 2.

According to PSC member Anthony Loke, the EC's failure to do so would be tantamount to showing disrespect to the House, which had last year approved the panel's recommendation to allow all Malaysians abroad to vote.

At present, only full-time Malaysian students, civil servants and their spouses living abroad are allowed to vote during the elections.

"The EC has since not come back to us with the mechanism... What they have said is they need more time to study it and they just 'KIV' (keep in view).

"EC must come back to us and give us their proposal... either by using the existing postal voting system or by any other system," said Loke.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak announced the formation of the PSC following months of international condemnation against his government's high-handed approach in cracking down on Bersih 2.0's July 9 rally.

The election watchdog, which comprises over 62 non-governmental NGOs, had stages its

second-such street rally since 2007 calling for electoral reforms.

Among others, the thousands who took to the streets that day, rallied for the present electoral roll to be cleaned, postal balloting to be reformed, indelible ink introduced, extended campaign period, free and fair access to media, and others.

But the government's pre-rally clampdown, which saw thousands arrested, many for the possession of Bersih 2.0's signature yellow colours, ignited international uproar and saw the Najib administration earn much criticism in the foreign media.

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