

Pakatan to back 'Bersih 3.0' if polls reform fails

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By Lisa J. Ariffin

KUALA LUMPUR, March 18 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) leaders have declared their support for a "Bersih 3.0" rally in the capital city if the Najib administration fail to implement meaningful electoral reforms before polls are held.

The leaders stressed that Putrajaya could avoid a tumultuous rally like last July 9 if their demands are met and recommendations by the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) for electoral reforms are implemented by the Election Commission (EC).

Lembah Pantai MP Nurul Izzah Anwar said the EC's "snail pace movements" with implementing the PSC's recommendations gives credence to demands for a Bersih 3.0 rally, which will be country's third since 2007.

"The rakyat shouldn't be fooled by mere pledges and public relations' showpieces. The EC must be pushed to implement reforms," Nurul Izzah told The Malaysian Insider.

"Else, we're left with no choice but to take the demand for free and fair elections to the streets," she said.

Shah Alam MP Khalid Samad mirrored Nurul's sentiment, saying if the EC does not address the issues put forward by the PSC soon, "then obviously the statement by Datuk Ambiga will be considered seriously by our party".

"The acid test for any matured democracy is when change occurs through the electoral process. Malaysia has for the past 55 years never experienced change in power," he said, adding that the BN government must give way to the people who are interested in bringing about this change.

"As long as no change in the government occurs, particularly at the federal level, then the status of democracy will always be in question."

Additionally, DAP parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang said: "If there is no progress made in the reforms, then the Bersih committee and those responsible will have to look into the possibility of another rally."

This said, Khalid pointed out that there is time for the EC to come clean and win back the confidence of the Malaysian public

"There is still time for the EC to come clean and win our confidence by showing us what they've done as far as all comments and complains were raised," he said.

"I hope it doesn't have to come to that (another rally) and that the government will be responsible enough to ensure the coming election will be as clean and transparent as possible," he added.

Bersih 2.0 chairman Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan had today warned Putrajaya of a potential

"Bersih 3.0" rally, pointing to lagging polls reforms and reports of a sudden surge of voters in some parliamentary constituencies.

"Looking at the way things are going now, we may have no choice. Do not rule out Bersih 3.0," Ambiga told The Malaysian Insider.

"If the government is not serious about electoral reform the public will have to make itself heard," she added.

Thousands of Malaysians took to the streets on July 9 to join Bersih 2.0's rally for free and fair elections but the protest turned ugly at midday when riot police launched tear gas canisters and water cannons to disperse participants.

The widespread clampdown, which saw more than 1,000 people arrested even before the rally, earned the Najib administration a whiplashing in the international media.

Under pressure, the government had then promised a slew of reform measures, which included the formation of the PSC and the enactment of the highly-criticised Peaceful Assembly Act last year.

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