

Need to define 'caretaker govt'
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PROTOCOL: The Parliamentary Select Committee on Electoral Reforms has suggested the formation of a caretaker government after the dissolution of parliament to oversee the security of the country and the election process. Yiswaree Palansamy and Lavanya Lingan examine how the system is practised in other Commonwealth countries

KUALA LUMPUR: There is a crucial need for proper guidelines pertaining to the administration of a caretaker government.

Parliamentary Select Committee's (PSC) committee member P. Kamalanathan said they had already requested the Election Commission to come up with a code of ethics on the matter.

"Currently, there is no protocol to govern an interim administration system and this leads to many unanswered questions pertaining to the system.

"With the protocol, which we hope the EC could come up with in the next three months, there will be transparency," said the Hulu Selangor member of parliament.

He said the decisions made by the prime minister before Parliament was dissolved could be implemented when he served as a caretaker prime minister.

He said the practice in Malaysia since achieving independence has always been for the prime minister himself to serve as the caretaker prime minister.

Last Wednesday, the PSC on Electoral Reforms, in its final report, had made 22 recommendations, including the setting up of a caretaker government upon the dissolution of Parliament.

The recommendations were tabled and passed by the Dewan Rakyat without debate.

The report stated that the EC should, within three months of the tabling of the report, prepare guidelines and a "code of conduct" for parties which would become the "caretaker government" until the new government was formed.

The nine-man committee from the government and the opposition unanimously agreed on the 18 recommendations while the other four were voted upon.

He said the caretaker government system was fashioned from Britain's Westminster system, which is a democratic parliamentary system of government.

The term comes from the Palace of Westminster, the seat of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. This was incorporated into the Constitution by the Reid Commission in 1957 here.

However, the term "caretaker government" has yet to be defined here, including incorporating into it the code of conduct for the temporary administration which would be holding power until the formation of a new government. By Yiswaree Palansamy and Lavanya Lingan.

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