

Implement PSC reforms before polls, Bar Council tells Najib
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, April 4 — The Bar Council today urged Datuk Seri Najib Razak to “exercise political will” and ensure all the electoral reform recommendations passed by Parliament yesterday would be implemented before the 13th general election.

Council president Lim Chee Wee said in a statement here that the prime minister should also consider the weaknesses in the 22 recommendations, which were contained in the parliamentary select committee’s (PSC) final report to the House.

“The Malaysian Bar urges the PM... to pursue holistic solutions towards rectifying the problems of the electoral roll and implement unhesitatingly all the recommendations of the PSC, before the next general election,” he said.

Lim described, however, the PSC’s report as “incomplete” and “inadequate” to achieve free and fair elections, which was the panel’s main objective when it was formed last year.

Najib had mooted the PSC last October, several months after his administration drew widespread criticism in the international media for its handling of Bersih 2.0’s rally for free and fair election last July 9.

But the PSC’s 22 recommendations, tabled and approved by Parliament without debate yesterday, have been criticised for purportedly failing to touch on specific issues pertaining to discrepancies in the current electoral roll.

“This was the principal and immediate concern that gave rise to Bersih 2.0,” Lim reminded today.

“The measures recommended by the PSC in relation to the electoral roll do not engender faith and confidence in the integrity and veracity of the principal electoral roll,” he added.

Lim said the process of updating the voter registry should be guaranteed free from fraud while the existing electoral roll should be weeded of erroneous entries.

The PSC, he complained, had made only a “nominal nod” in that direction by referring to a brief audit of the electoral roll by government agency Mimos Bhd.

The audit, added Lim, had been conducted within very limited parameters.

He noted that the PSC had also failed to deal with the Election Commission’s (EC) alleged lack of commitment to implementing reforms, which he said was proven when the authority rejected six out of the 10 recommendations in the panel’s interim report last year.

Even more daunting, said Lim, was how the bipartisan parliamentary panel had not

prescribed a fixed timeline for all of its 22 recommendations, leading to concerns that the polls process would be just as fraudulent in the coming 13th general election.

"While the Malaysian Bar acknowledges that some of the 22 recommendations of the PSC are positive, and represent a step in the right direction, the PSC has missed an ideal opportunity to make comprehensive and extensive recommendations to realise Malaysians' aspiration for free and fair elections," he said.

Lim also lamented Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tan Sri Pandikar Amin Mulia's refusal yesterday to allow a "minority report" to be attached to the PSC's final 22 recommendations.

This, he said, meant that the dissenting views expressed by the panel's non-Barisan Nasional (BN) members were not formally recorded in the PSC's final report to the House.

"For the Speaker to have disallowed it means that the PSC's final report fails to reflect the diversity of views expressed within the PSC," said Lim.

The nine-member PSC had included three lawmakers from the federal opposition — PKR's Azmin Ali, DAP's Anthony Loke and PAS's Dr Hatta Ramli — all of whom had objected to four of the 22 recommendations put forward in the final report.

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