

**Ongkili: Government, Parliament can ensure EC carries out reforms**  
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**By Shannon Teoh**

KUALA LUMPUR, April 12 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak can show his commitment to free and fair elections by sacking the Election Commission (EC) chief if the body fails to carry out electoral reforms adopted by the government, according to Datuk Seri Maximus Ongkili.

The chairman of the recently-concluded parliamentary select committee on electoral reforms added that recommendations from the panel to set up a permanent panel of lawmakers to monitor the EC and for the commission to report to Parliament directly will ensure greater accountability.

“Yes, that happens in any institution. You choose the right people and you give the trust to them. If they don’t perform, you just change them,” the Parti Bersatu Sabah deputy president said when asked if the prime minister should remove EC leaders if they fail to carry out reforms.

“You have to wait for their term to expire then only you can change, but if they do something wrong you can dismiss them,” he told The Malaysian Insider in a recent interview.

The science, technology and innovation minister added that making the EC report to Parliament and forming a new select committee to monitor the body will “give you teeth to ask how these recommendations are being done... if they cannot implement, why?”

“I don’t think the EC is that happy, to say the least, because it is a lot of work,” he said.

Opposition members of the select committee have complained that the EC has shown a lack of commitment to reforms, including their reluctance to address hundreds of thousands of dubious names on the electoral roll.

But the EC, led by chairman Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof, has said it has no legal powers to remove already gazetted voters except in the event of death.

Bersih has said it will hold its third rally for free and fair elections on April 28 because it is necessary to warn Malaysians that the country is about to face its “dirtiest” polls to date.

The electoral reforms movement expressed disappointment over the PSC’s 22-point proposal, saying that despite the Najib administration’s repeated assurances and promises, the panel had failed to introduce meaningful changes to the election system.

The coalition of 84 NGOs, which also demanded the resignation of the entire EC over their alleged disregard to reform the polls processes, has also won the backing of Pakatan Rakyat (PR) who accuse the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) of widespread electoral fraud.

But Ongkili said in the interview that “the allegations that the government influences the EC are not true.”

"Both sides of the house have access to the EC. We also complain that people are transferred to our area, as much as the opposition complains, just that this is not known," said the Kota Marudu MP, who was in the opposition prior to 2002.

Bersih's July 9, 2011 rally saw tens of thousands flood the streets of the capital to call for free and fair elections but police dispersed them with water cannon and tear gas in chaotic scenes that saw over 1,500 arrested, scores injured and the death of an ex-soldier.

Putrajaya came under international condemnation for the clampdown, leading Najib to announce the bipartisan polls panel to look into improving the electoral system.

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