

Another Bersih rally 'not very sensible', says Ongkili
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By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, April 3 — Datuk Seri Maximus Ongkili dismissed today as futile a planned third rally by Bersih to call for free and fair elections, saying there was “hardly anything” his parliamentary select committee (PSC) did not address.

The science, technology and innovation minister told reporters today that the panel on electoral improvements, which he chaired for the past six months, could not listen to Bersih alone as 106 other forms of feedback were received during its public hearings.

“What other issue do they have to bring up? Only on corruption which is outside the scope of the Election Commission (EC).

“Running the government from the streets is not the correct way. To use an extreme situation to press people against the wall is not very sensible,” he said.

The Malaysian Insider reported today that Bersih is expected to announce tomorrow that it will hold another rally at the end of the month.

A source said this comes on the back of the bipartisan parliamentary select committee’s alleged failure to resolve key issues and pander to the electoral reform movement’s earlier demands ahead of the coming polls.

The source said more damning evidence of electoral fraud have also been uncovered, leading to the belief that the polls panel was merely a whitewash by the Najib administration to appear sincere in its pledge for reforms.

The bipartisan nine-member PSC was mooted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak last year, months after his administration earned widespread criticism over its handling of Bersih’s second rally for free and fair elections on July 9.

After six months of meetings, discussions and a fact-finding mission abroad, the panel prepared a 22-point final report and distributed it to federal lawmakers in Parliament yesterday.

It was to have been debated today but Pakatan Rakyat’s (PR) insistence on a minority report resulted in the Speaker calling for a vote to adopt the panel’s recommendations without debate.

Barisan Nasional (BN) MPs voted in favour of the report, defeating the opposition coalition.

PR have repeatedly complained that the committee has failed to address fundamental issues to ensure a clean and fair election process, particularly the EC’s alleged lack of commitment to cleaning the electoral roll.

Bersih chairman Datuk S. Ambiga had on March 18 warned Putrajaya of a potential “Bersih

3.0" rally, pointing to lagging poll reforms and reports of a sudden surge of voter numbers 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 had told The Malaysian Insider.

PR leaders subsequently declared their support for the rally should the government fail to fulfil its pledges for meaningful electoral reforms before polls are called.

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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