

Bersih 3.0 will happen this month, say sources
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 3 — Bersih is expected to announce the date of its third rally for free and fair elections tomorrow, which sources within the election watchdog group say may take place at the end of the month.

A Bersih steering committee member, who did not wish be named, told The Malaysian Insider that details of "Bersih 3.0" will be revealed at a press conference at the Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall (KLSCAH) here.

File photo of police using water cannons to disperse participants of the Bersih rally in July last year near Puduraya in Kuala Lumpur. — Picture by Choo Choy May
The member would not divulge further information but Internet reports have already marked April 28 as the likely date for the coming rally, and Dataran Merdeka as the chosen venue.

Another Bersih source would neither confirm nor deny the rumours, but admitted yesterday the group has plans in the pipeline to push for greater electoral reforms.

This, said the source, comes on the back of the government-mooted Parliamentary Select Committee's (PSC) alleged failure to resolve key issues and pander to Bersih'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 PSC could have merely been a whitewash by the Najib administration to appear sincere in its pledge for reforms.

"We have found more evidence of electoral fraud and this leads to the question on whether the entire PSC itself was just a cover-up.

"On the walk (rally), you can say I am neither confirming (the date) nor denying,

"But I can say for certain that the evidence of fraud is very, very outrageous," said the source.

The bipartisan nine-member PSC was mooted by Datuk Seri Najib Razak last year, months after his administration earned widespread criticisms 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.

Debate on the report is scheduled for 11.30am today but already, Pakatan Rakyat (PR) lawmakers have expressed disappointment in the panel's findings and reform recommendations.

Among others, the three PR members in the PSC have, since last week, been complaining that the panel had failed to address fundamental issues to ensure a clean and fair election process, particularly the Election Commission's (EC) alleged lack of commitment to clean the electoral roll.

The EC, PR members have repeatedly pointed out, had recently admitted to the existence of 42,000 questionable voters in the roll but had not moved to address the problem.

Additionally, they noted that the commission had also failed to moot a workable method to allow overseas voting for all Malaysians, despite being urged to do so in the PSC's interim report released last December.

Bersih chairman Datuk S. Ambiga had on March 18 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 had told The Malaysian Insider.

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

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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