

Bersih 3.0 rally a hasty decision, says EC deputy
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By Syed Mu'az Syed Putra

KUALA LUMPUR, April 5 — Bersih's decision to hold a third rally for free and fair elections on April 28 is hasty and rash, Datuk Wira Wan Ahmad Wan Omar has said.

The Election Commission (EC) deputy chairman said Bersih should have instead accepted the 22-point recommendations presented by the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) on electoral reforms and allow the commission to study the recommendations first. He questioned Bersih's rationale in having a third rally, and pointed out that the EC itself has yet to issue a response to the PSC's findings.

"They should be patient... they say they are smart but they are close-minded... what they are doing is rushed, hasty and troublesome to people," Wan Ahmad told The Malaysian Insider.

"The EC has not even come out with any statement, we will study the proposal and come out with an official reply later," he added.

The EC no. 2 said it was only fair to allow some time for the commission to "carefully" study the PSC's recommendations, as it involved matters concerning the Federal Constitution.

"The PSC has worked hard on this for six months... the EC will meet soon to study the proposal carefully."

Bersih yesterday confirmed April 28 as the date for "Bersih 3.0", its third rally for free and fair elections, which will go on from 2pm to 4pm at Dataran Merdeka.

But this time, the gathering will also be joined by simultaneous events across the country, likely adding pressure to the government to accede to the group's demand for a total reform to the country's election processes.

Bersih's previous rally on July 9, 2011 turned chaotic when the authorities employed huge teams of riot police, armed with water cannons and tear gas launchers, to disperse the crowd of thousands.

The crowd had converged on the streets of the capital from the early hours of July 9, defying earlier warnings that their participation could result in arrests.

Over 1,600 people were detained as a result, including Bersih chief Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan and scores of opposition lawmakers, but Bersih 2.0 later declared the event a success based on the number of participants and the publicity it had earned in both local and international media.

The government moved quickly to enact the Peaceful Assembly Act after the event and formed the PSC for electoral reforms, but Bersih 2.0 maintains that these moves were

insufficient.

Ambiga yesterday pointed out that the PSC's 22 recommendations had failed to deal with specific discrepancies in the electoral roll.

These include duplicate voters, overly large numbers of voters registered to a single address, the existence of deceased voters, and a suspicious spike in the number of civilian and postal voters, among many other similar irregularities.

The former Bar Council chairman also noted that the PSC had not only failed to address issues surrounding election offences and dirty politics, but also did not expressly direct the EC to implement all 22 reform recommendations in time for the 13th general election.

She said it was Bersih's hope that national polls are not called anytime soon, in order to give the government enough time to implement the reforms.

Bersih's first rally in 2007, also for free and fair elections, has been widely credited for the 2008 political tsunami that saw Barisan Nasional (BN) lose its customary two-thirds parliamentary majority.

The ruling coalition faced a stunning defeat in five states, and the historic event led to the formation of Pakatan Rakyat (PR), a loose pact comprising the DAP, PKR and PAS.

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