

Pak Samad ready for Bersih 3.0, 'disturbed' by lagging reforms
The Malaysian Insider
April 5, 2012
By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, April 5 — National literary icon Datuk A. Samad Said made headlines last year when it was his slightly-hunched, barefooted frame that was seen leading a group of Bersih 2.0 marchers to deliver a memorandum on electoral reforms to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

Today, he is "disturbed" that no real electoral reforms have taken place since the chaotic July 9 event.

Samad makes a point at the Bersih press conference in Kuala Lumpur on April 4, 2012. On his left is Ambiga. — Picture by Jack Ooi
The soft-spoken septuagenarian told The Malaysian Insider repeatedly that he was "not happy" with the 22 recommendations put forward by the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) on polls reform in its report tabled in Parliament on Tuesday.

The government's and PSC's failure to suggest total reform, he said, was "good reason" why Bersih 3.0 "should" be held.

"I'm not happy with what has happened. I'm not happy. Not happy," the bearded poet said yesterday, shaking his shock of white hair.

"So that's why I think, because of what's happening, it is very disturbing as far as I'm concerned.

"That's a good reason why we should have this (Bersih 3.0)," he said.

Samad or "Pak Samad" as he is fondly known, was speaking to The Malaysian Insider after co-chairing a press conference earlier yesterday afternoon with Bersih 2.0 chief Datuk Ambiga Sreenivasan and the election watchdog's other steering committee members.

The group had just announced "Bersih 3.0", its third rally for free and fair elections, which is scheduled for April 28 from 2pm to 4pm at Dataran Merdeka here.

Making the case for "Bersih 3.0", Samad continued that any reforms to the election process, whether put forward by the PSC or others, "must" be done before the coming 13th general election.

He complained that the PSC's report, passed in the House without debate, had not expressly indicated a timeline for all its 22 reform recommendations.

The panel, he said, should have done better.

"They should do better, actually. Because they did not even say when they will have these things (recommendations) [implemented].

"Because, what we care about [is that] all these things must be done (implemented) before the election," he said.

Failing which, Samad added, the PSC's six months of meetings and investigation would be rendered "meaningless".

He expressed the hope that more Malaysians would take up Bersih's cause and join the group this April 28 for its "sit-in protest".

"I hope, I hope (that more will join). Because it is not only in KL but also in other states and around the world," he said.

Despite his advanced years, the 76-year-old Samad appears unfazed at the thought of another massive march that could turn out as chaotic as last year's event.

Instead, he is ready again to lead thousands for "Bersih 3.0", which he predicts will be attended by at least 500,000 people worldwide.

During Bersih 2.0 last July 9, Samad had to traverse barefooted for a long distance amid the heavy bombardment of tear gas canisters and water cannons fired at protestors.

He had lost his shoes in the confusion but was later offered a pair of slippers by an unknown individual to protect his feet.

After the event, political analysts called Samad an "icon" for Bersih, saying that despite him not being a politician, his involvement had helped the group shed any element of partisan politics within it.

The award-winning literary giant, they said, had instead sparked a spirit of nationalism and unity among Malaysians across races.

The Malaysian Insider

Copyright © 2012 The Malaysian Insider

Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/pak-samad-ready-for-bersih-3.0-disturbed-by-lagging-reforms/>