

Bersih 3.0 central to free and fair GE13, says MP
The Malaysian Insider
April 23, 2012

KUALA LUMPUR, April 23 — Bersih 3.0 is needed more than ever if the 13th general election (GE13) is to be free and fair, PKR MP Sivarasa Rasiah said.

The opposition lawmaker accused the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) of colluding with the Election Commission (EC) to manipulate a victory in the next elections by forcing through key changes to the law on the electoral process.

Sivarasa wants EC officials to resign for botching up the legislative changes. — File pic
“Bersih’s demand that the key recommendations of the PSC (Parliamentary Select Committee) report must be implemented before GE13 is central to a free and fair election,” he said in a statement yesterday.

“They presented a Bill to amend the Election Offences Act 1954 to further restrict scrutiny of the voting process by representatives of political parties and make the system more amenable to manipulation,” he added.

The Subang MP pointed to the federal government’s rush last Thursday to pass into law three crucial changes to the election process, ahead of national polls that could determine a regime change for Malaysia.

He highlighted that the BN bloc pushed through the Election Offences (Amendment) Bill 2012 that greatly curbed the check-and-balance process.

The three biggest cuts were removing the right of political parties to set up information-check booths to aid voters to check their identities and voting streams outside polling centres; the right to have their own observers inside polling stations; and the right to decide the duration of their polling and counting agents at the polling centres.

Others major changes include deleting the need for printers and publishers to detail their names and addresses on the print material, which could lead to a flood of defamatory and racist remarks.

He said that nothing had been done on key issues such as fair access to the media, the set-up of a caretaker government and an early voting system to replace the existing postal system for security forces and their spouses that was open to abuse.

He added that none of the talked-about regulations to refine the early voting system was presented even on the last day of the Dewan Rakyat sitting, which drew questions surrounding its enforcement in time for polls expected to be called this year.

“These legislative moves by the BN and EC on Thursday made it clear that their real intent was to make the electoral process less transparent and easier to manipulate,” Sivarasa said.

He demanded the EC officials resign for botching up the legislative changes and their

stubbornness against carrying out the PSC's recommendations as well as Bersih's demands.

The civil society movement is planning a sit-down protest at Dataran Merdeka this Saturday to draw attention to the electoral system, which it says is in dire need of reform to pave the way for a truly accountable government.

Its massive street rally on July 9 last year spawned a series of solidarity demonstrations worldwide and drew widespread empathy amid a police crackdown on its democratic practices.

The Malaysian Insider

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