

Ambiga: Bersih about people power, not regime change
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KUALA LUMPUR, July 11 — The Bersih electoral reform movement does not aim to topple the democratically-elected government but is focused solely on empowering voters, its chief Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan has said.

Leaders from the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) government, including Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, have repeatedly painted Bersih's third and most recent rally last April 28 as an attempt to oust its democratically-elected government, a charge Ambiga has denied just as frequently.

"What we want to see is a multi-party democracy where, every two or three years, the [leading] party will change," the decorated lawyer and activist told British daily The Guardian in an interview published today.

"We're not averse to Barisan coming back but if parties think they're going to lose power, they behave a lot better.

"[This] is about power coming back to the people. It's about us (the people) being in charge," Ambiga was quoted adding.

Bersih has been lobbying the Najib administration to enforce electoral reforms, including cleaning the voter roll of dubious entries, before the next national polls due in nine months.

Putrajaya has pledged to undertake the reforms after last year's massive July 9 rally garnered negative publicity for the Najib administration around the world, but the authorities have been accused of dragging their feet over their implementation, which the Election Commission (EC) said will take time.

Ambiga also accused the BN coalition of a relentlessly "demonising" the electoral watchdog, with the latest incident seeing anti-Bersih flyers bearing the Information, Communication and Culture Ministry's official logo being distributed around the Klang Valley.

A social activist had alerted Bersih recently after finding one such flyer portraying supporters of the electoral reform movement as "pengacau" (rabble-rousers) despite two ongoing public inquiries into the chaotic April 28 rally in the capital city.

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