

Pakatan to push for parliamentary panel to redraw seats fairly
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By Syed Jaymal Zahiid

PETALING JAYA, May 24 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) wants a parliamentary select committee (PSC) as a bilateral platform to ensure a fairer constituency redelineation exercise once Parliament convenes, its leaders said last night.

A PSC on the redrawing exercise, which is due year-end, would allow both sides to engage in a constructive dialogue for an impartial process, said DAP lawmaker Tony Pua, who added that this would be PR's first agenda when the Dewan Rakyat meets in June.

"We will fight for this, a parliamentary select committee, we want a select committee on the redelineation exercise for a fairer distribution of constituencies," he told a crowd of about 5,000 at last night's "thanksgiving" PR rally here.

PR leaders had recently revealed its plan to make full use of their increased parliamentary numbers to ensure constituencies are fairly redrawn when the Election Commission (EC) kicks off the redelineation exercise this year-end.

Its leaders noted that if the exercise involves an increase in seat numbers, a two-thirds majority vote is needed to approve the changes before they are passed by the lower House.

The ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) does not have the required two-thirds majority in Parliament, with only 133 seats to PR's 89 seats, and will require votes from opposition lawmakers to approve the exercise.

The allegedly unfair dispersal of voters in constituencies has been used as a major argument point by PR lawmakers to back accusations that gerrymandering in favour of BN has helped the ruling pact stay in power.

In his speech last night, Pua again highlighted the matter and said that the lopsided redrawing of constituencies had ensured BN's rule remain unchallenged despite the ruling coalition having lost the popular vote.

"It is the unfair redelineation that has given BN the win," he said.

Pua later told The Malaysian Insider that PR's plan to push for a PSC had been agreed on by the coalition's top leadership.

Yesterday, academic Amer Saifude told a forum that BN rule will continue as long as Malaysia uses the first-past-the-post voting system despite redelineation,

The Universiti Malaya Centre for Democracy and Elections (Umcedel) deputy director said the expected redelineation of constituencies by year-end would benefit Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's coalition and even better its Election 2013 performance.

"As long as we practice this first-past-the-post system, it will be advantageous to BN," Amer told a forum on the 13th general election outcome.

"History has shown that every time there is a re-demarcation process, BN would perform

better," he added.

Despite winning only 47 per cent of the popular vote in the May 5 elections, Najib saw his coalition keeping the government with a simple majority, bagging 133 federal seats against PR's 89.

Amer pointed out that Najib was the first BN chief to score a weaker mandate in his maiden bid for power, a reflection of the faulty fundamentals of the first-past-the-post system.

Amer said the system's glaring defect could be seen in how BN, bar a few exceptions, had never won the popular vote by more than 60 per cent but yet managed to win a huge number of the seats it contested in.

Pua had said that with the polls now over and efforts under way to challenge some of the results through election petitions, the next step for PR would be to focus on the coming redelineation exercise as well as campaigning for a proportional representation system.

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