

**EC needs new blood more than extra bosses, Najib told  
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By Mohd Farhan Darwis**

KUALA LUMPUR, June 1 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak's attempts to sharpen the Election Commission's (EC) battered credibility by placing it under Parliament's watch is meaningless without changing its leadership, an electoral reform activist and an opposition MP said today.

Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan and the DAP's Lim Kit Siang demanded today the government replace the election regulator's chairman Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Yusof and his deputy Datuk Wan Ahmad Wan Omar with fresh faces to effect real change.

"There is no meaning even if they put the EC under the PSC, their members must resign," Ambiga told The Malaysian Insider when contacted.

"They must resign, that is more important, so they have better credibility," the co-chair of the electoral reform group Bersih said, in response to the prime minister's announcement this morning that he was relinquishing control of the EC to a bipartisan parliamentary select committee (PSC).

The EC has always reported to the Prime Minister's Department.

Ambiga said the EC is a body formed under the Federal Constitution that cannot simply be shoved to anyone's responsibility.

"This move is unconstitutional. They are not a government department," she added. Gelang Patah MP Lim said in a statement that Najib's announcement to transfer control of the EC to a bipartisan parliamentary panel was a step in the right direction towards electoral reform but shared reservations on its effectiveness.

"It would have been more proper for Najib to have full consultation with the Pakatan Rakyat MPs on this proposal before any announcement is made so that it would be seen as an innovation which has received bipartisan discussion and support, including the full details involved," the veteran lawmaker said.

"[The] Election Commission must start with a completely new slate with a new chairman and deputy chairman if it is to command full public confidence," he said, adding that "the present chairman and deputy chairman had operated as if they are Barisan Nasional protagonists and politicians in taking on Pakatan Rakyat leaders."

The election regulator has been accused by opposition politicians of favouring the ruling BN and even helping the 13-party coalition keep its unbroken grip on power for years, but none more so than in the recently-concluded May 5 general election.

The opposition PR has organised several rallies throughout the country after the contentious May 5 polls, accusing BN of "stealing" the election as the coalition had lost the popular vote for the first time since 1969, but still retained federal power.

BN, which got just under 47 per cent of the popular vote against PR's 51 per cent, won 133 seats in the 222-member Dewan Rakyat while the opposition gained 89.

In announcing the move, Najib said he was transferring his office's responsibility to oversee the election regulator to Parliament where a panel comprising members from both sides of the political divide would help improve its credibility.

"With this step, it is hoped that the EC's independence will no longer be questioned and the people's confidence will be strengthened towards the EC," he was quoted by state news agency Bernama as saying at the Yang di-Pertuan Agong's official birthday celebration in the city.

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