

Pakatan MPs to boycott parliamentary briefing in reforms protest
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KUALA LUMPUR, June 7 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) MPs are expected to boycott next Tuesday's parliamentary briefing as a symbolic gesture to show the pact's seriousness in its push for electoral reforms.

The DAP's Anthony Loke (picture) confirmed the decision, which was made earlier this week by the PR leadership council, saying the move comes on the back of the string of rallies held nationwide to protest against Barisan Nasional's (BN) alleged use of fraud to win the just-concluded Election 2013.

He noted that the pact was also planning another mammoth protest in Padang Merbok here next Saturday and attending the briefing would appear to contradict the purpose of the rally.

"The PR leadership council felt that we need to exert as much pressure as we can to get the government to respond to our demands for electoral reform.

"So at the moment, we feel we should not be attending the briefing... on the one hand we are planning a major rally, so on the other hand we should not be attending the briefing," he said when contacted.

The Seremban MP, however, stressed that failure to attend the briefing would not harm the position of PR's elected representatives in Parliament as attendance was not compulsory.

He explained that the briefing was meant mostly for first-term MPs as it seeks to explain technical matters governing their roles and conduct in the House such as how to file motions, the Standing Orders and other administrative issues.

Asked if the PR leadership planned on extending the boycott to the coming Parliament sitting on June 26, Loke said: "I don't think so."

PKR's Pandan MP Rafizi Ramli also confirmed that he had been informed about the briefing boycott but said it was not meant to be a publicity move by the federal opposition pact.

He echoed Loke's views, pointing out that PR was still in the thick of its campaign against alleged malpractices by the authorities during Election 2013.

"We also do not want to give BN the opportunity to twist things around and say that while PR is fighting against fraud and bringing evidence to the public, we are also eager to be MPs.

"But anyway, it is only an administrative briefing... our focus is really on our fight against fraud and for true reforms to the system," he said.

PR leaders have claimed that Election 2013 was fraught with irregularities, starting from the use of an indelible ink that was not indelible to discrepancies in the voter roll and outright cheating on Polling Day itself through the alleged use of phantom voters and electricity blackouts.

Immediately after the May 5 polls, Rafizi made a series of exposes on what he claimed was proof of fraud as the opposition aims to pressure Putrajaya to implement polls reform, starting with the complete overhaul of the Election Commission (EC).

The PKR strategy director also recently revealed that all three PR parties have confirmed plans to file 41 election petitions — three by the DAP, 20 by PKR and 18 by PAS — before the June 12 deadline is up.

According to Rafizi, at least 30 seats should undergo a re-election due to the high probability of vote manipulation in these constituencies. PR had won 89 seats against BN's 133 in the May 5 polls.

But apart from the court petitions, PR and other civil society groups have been hosting mammoth rallies since May 5 to push their agenda for reform, outlining three main conditions, with the first being the resignation of all EC members for its failure to ensure a free and fair Election 2013.

The "Black 505" rallies, as they are called, were also created as a movement of protest against PR's claims of irregularities during the polls, which saw the ruling BN retain power despite losing the popular vote.

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