

MoU Between Government and PH a Necessary and Important Step Forward But It Must Be Inclusive

The Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (BERSIH 2.0) welcomes the joint announcement by the representatives of the Government and Pakatan Harapan (PH) that they will be signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Transformation and Political Stability today at 5pm in the Banquet Hall of Parliament House.

This is a rare achievement between the government and opposition in Malaysian politics, where bipartisanship triumphs over spiteful rhetorics, one-upmanship and mindless politicking. The agreement pivots on the need for political stability in order to better manage the COVID-19 pandemic and restore the economy.

Bersih 2.0 also welcomes the promise to publish the details of the MoU in full at the signing, allowing the Malaysian public not only to witness the agreement but also to hold both parties accountable to fulfill the terms within it.

However, we noted that the other parties in the opposition bench, namely Warisan, Pejuang, PSB and two independent MPs, are not party to the MoU, (whether they were invited or not, we do not know). We strongly hope that the benefits of institutional reforms including equal Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and representation in Parliamentary Special Select Committees (PSSC), would be extended to all MPs in the opposition bench and not restricted to only PH parliamentarians.

While this historic document is called a Memorandum of Understanding, it is essentially a Confidence and Supply Agreement (CSA) where in exchange for implementation of some policies and institutional reforms, the Opposition agrees to support the Government when it comes to votes of confidence and supply (budget) bills. The Opposition will not be part of the Government and is free to vote against any other bills as they deem fit.

We look forward to the details of the MoU but we believe that the 7-points reform package offered by Ismail Sabri on 10th September will be included, as well as additional reforms that PH may have requested. Any institutional reforms achieved from this MoU will benefit all political parties in the coming days as they would have the effect of levelling the political playing field, and start to bring an end to the current winner-takes-all situation.

More importantly, it would benefit the Rakyat when governments, the Parliament, and key institutions start working for and protecting the interests of the people instead of the politicians'. In a democracy, politicians should compete with each other to come up with better policies and laws that would improve the lives of the Rakyat. Institutional reform ensures that all parties compete fairly, and there are adequate checks and balances to prevent abuses of power and corruption.

Statement issued by:

The Steering Committee of BERSIH 2.0