

The Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (Bersih 2.0) while acknowledging that it is the right of the Sabah Chief Minister Shafie Apdal to call for the dissolution of the Sabah state assembly to pave the way for fresh state election due to defections by state assembly persons from his ruling coalition, we wish to reiterate that the perennial problem of defections by elected representatives that result in collapses of both state and Federal governments will remain in Malaysian politics as long as our law permits it.

In a parliamentary democracy, it is the prerogative of the Head of Government (the Chief Minister in this case) to request for early dissolution and the prerogative of the Head of State (the Governor) to decide to whether withhold his/her consent. If the consent has been granted, election cannot be cancelled by any claimant of majority in the dissolved legislature.

However, an early election may not guarantee a resolution to the political impasse if the outcome remains fragmented and politicians refuse to accept the outcome as final and respect the five-year mandate given to the winning coalition.

Elected representatives should not disregard their constituents' wishes and switch allegiance or worse, trade their seats for positions and money. Such acts are a betrayal of their voters and make a mockery of democracy and the electoral process.

Bersih 2.0 calls on all stakeholders to re-examine the root causes and weaknesses in our laws that give incentives to our politicians to indulge in party-hopping and support reforms that would bring stability to our political situation.

Among the reforms that we have advocated for are:

- 1. Recall election as a mechanism to deter party defections.** This is a mechanism that would empower constituents of the defecting reps to have the opportunity to initiate a recall or removal of the rep if they disagree with the defection.
- 2. Comprehensive political financing reform** to deter politicians from defecting for major incentives such as allowing elected politicians to sit on the board of GLCs or for threat of not being given equal constituency development fund to all elected representatives and no public funding of political parties
- 3. End selective prosecution or immunity** by separating the function of the Attorney-General and that of the Public Prosecutor. All key institutions should also be free from the direct or indirect influence of the Prime Minister.

**4. Change the electoral system** to allow direct mandate for party so that at least some seats remains with the party which wins them instead of with the candidates.

We call upon all parties taking part in the state elections to make their stand clear on these four reforms and the voters to consider them at polling booths if they treasure democracy and political stability.

It should also be noted that the snap election will be held while the COVID-19 virus is still a threat to public health and additional safety protocols and personnel would be required to ensure that the campaigning and polling would not lead to another outbreak.

Bersih 2.0 calls on voters in Sabah to come out in large numbers to vote and to ensure that the election is free and fair, and clean from money politics so that the outcome would be credible.

We also call on the Election Commission to allow Sabahans working in Peninsular to register as postal voters in view of the high cost of flying home to vote and also the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus.

**Statement issued by:**

**The Steering Committee of Bersih 2.0**