

## **PM says govt MPs will back constitutional vote, hopes for opposition support**

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Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob said the government MPs are in support of the constitutional amendment tomorrow to "enable" a future anti-hopping legislation and hoped that the opposition will also lend their backing.

"Without the amendment of Article 10, any (anti-party hopping) laws that have been passed cannot be enforced, as it will contradict Article 10," he told reporters after a briefing with government leaders in Putrajaya today.

Ismail Sabri (above) said the previous indication from the opposition was that they would support it and he hoped that they will follow through.

"Hence, I hope that promises made will be kept tomorrow," he said, referring to tomorrow's vote.

According to a copy of the constitutional amendment bill shared by Subang MP Wong Chen, it would amend Article 10 of the Federal Constitution - which enshrines freedom of speech, assembly, and association.

It would insert a sub-clause that allows party membership of MPs and assemblypersons to be restricted by federal law.

The wording of the sub-clause reads: "(3A) Notwithstanding paragraph (c) of Clause (2) and Clause (3), restrictions on the right to form associations conferred by paragraph (c) of Clause (1) relating to membership in a political party of members of the House of Representatives and members of the State Legislative Assembly may also be imposed by federal law."

While the constitutional amendment would require the support of two-thirds of MPs, the introduction of any legislation invoking the constitutional provision will only require a simple majority.

The provision would pave the way for the creation of an anti-hopping bill but its general wording can also allow the creation of other laws to restrict the freedom of association which has raised concern among some MPs and the civil society.

On the anti-party hopping legislation that will follow the constitutional amendment, de facto Law Minister Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar said a bipartisan select committee will be established, comprising government and opposition representatives as well as academicians.

The committee will look into and refine the details of the bill.

Ismail Sabri said that he hoped the anti-hopping bill can be expedited as the government intended for it to be tabled during the July Parliament sitting.

However, he maintained that its possibility would be dependent on how fast the committee can suggest the bill's revisions to the cabinet for approval.

### **Freedom of association remains**

Meanwhile, Ismail Sabri refuted claims that the government was trying to delay or not table the bill, alluding to an issue of details within the proposed bill.

He said the amended bill will include more details such as clarification on party mergers or whether non-elected officials were allowed to switch between parties.

"Our focus is clear that the freedom of association remains, but the amendment concerns the party membership of MPs and assemblypersons.

"Therefore freedom of association remains, and will not be a barrier between parties."

Ismail Sabri added that while the amendment concerned MPs and assemblypersons, the cabinet was in support of it including senators as well.

However, he said, it would depend on whether the Dewan Rakyat speaker would approve of the proposal upon such notice.

"As of now, we will include MPs and assemblypersons unless the speaker agrees for us to include senators.

"If the speaker requests for us to send a 14-day notice, we will do it," he said.

Top government leaders gathered in Putrajaya earlier this evening for a closed-door meeting to discuss tomorrow's vote in the Dewan Rakyat on the constitutional amendment.

The meeting was supposed to be for all MPs but only a handful of opposition

representatives were present, namely from DAP and Warisan.

Pakatan Harapan MPs, along with representatives from Pejuang, Muda and Warisan, had their own separate briefing in Putrajaya.

However, PKR's Lembah Pantai MP Fahmi Fadzil acknowledged that they were invited by the government but chose to proceed with their own meeting first due to several pertinent issues that needed discussions.

Fahmi told Malaysiakini that many concerns were raised during the meeting of the proposed amendment, which will be communicated to the government.

"Based on today's meeting, the MOU Steering Committee and Anti-Hopping Law Technical Committee took note of the many issues and concerns raised by opposition MPs.

We will be communicating these issues and concerns, as well as possible solutions, to the government side and hope that some middle ground can be reached," he said.

However, another opposition MP declined to comment when asked whether they will vote in favour of the amendment during tomorrow's vote.

The constitutional amendment, which will require a two-thirds majority, can only pass with bipartisan support as neither side control a supermajority.

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