

**Malaysians form 'league of voters'**  
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**Helen Ang**

Civil society is taking the initiative to hold members of parliament accountable for the law-making process through organising a forum enabling ordinary and concerned citizens to meet their MPs.

From now until the next general election, the 'People's Parliament' will facilitate the public getting to know his MP and in the process get across their concerns and expectations.

The People's Parliament is the brainchild of prominent lawyer and human rights activist Haris Ibrahim who has been involved in Malaysia's litmus test cases on religious freedom, such as Lina Joy, S Shamala, R Subashini, the Terengganu Malay apostates and others.

Haris says the idea behind this movement is for the public to speak as a collective. While a lot of Malaysians are willing enough to complain, the citizen believes he is impotent to bring about change with his lone voice. By banding together as one however, the collected numbers can be more effective.

A proactive strategy that has been germinating in Haris for some time, he felt compelled to kick start this effort against an increasingly worrying political backdrop.

"The prime minister made a host of pre-election promises. ... The PM has not kept to those promises. Worse still, since the PM secured a landslide victory, there has been an alarming decline in race relations, supremacist sloganeering goes on inside and outside of Parliament by Umno MPs and ministers, religious persecution is rife, with blatant moves daily to turn this country into Talibanland."

### **Make them accountable**

He believes the two amendments to the Federal Constitution in 1988 and 2001, rubber stamped by Parliament, "bear testimony to the highest degree of incompetence and dereliction of duty on the part of a great many of those 'Yang Berhormats' (the MPs)."

It is the voters who have put the YBs in the House, and therefore bear responsibility for repercussions deriving from the said legislation. Hence it is similarly incumbent upon the voters to remedy the situation.

Malaysians taking part in this newly launched civil liberties venture have formed what they call a League of Voters. A novel feature informing this lobby is that its planning is conducted online with groups of 10, who could be strangers to one another but will later meet face-to-face.

Subsequently, these groups will seek meetings with the leadership of the ruling parties for discussion, and submission of a list of sitting MPs who are unacceptable to put them on notice to walk the talk.

Haris' appeal is "Can we quit griping and start acting, please?"

It remains to be seen whether his challenge to rise above the average Malaysian's famed

political apathy will be met. But for those willing to do more than just vent or 'lepas geram', Haris has a website which provides information on how to start holding our elected representative accountable.

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