

Dr M: New Bills to penalise party-hopping MPs must be studied wholly

ANY new Bills to penalise MPs who switch parties must be studied thoroughly before its implemented, says Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (Pejuang-Langkawi).

The former prime minister said while he supported Bills to penalise party-hopping MPs, the matter needs clearer definitions because the action was sometimes necessary when no parties had a clear majority after a general election.

"When there are no parties with enough numbers to form the next government, there is a need for parties to come together with major parties so they would have enough MPs to form the next government," he said in his speech on the Royal Address in Parliament yesterday.

Dr Mahathir also argued if small parties crossed over to major parties, it should not be considered party hopping.

"If this was done in an organised manner according to the rules and constitution of the party, and such decisions were made during party meetings... certain parties have to cross over to garner adequate numbers in the House.

"That is why party hopping cannot be banned just like that. There must be clear definitions.

"More in-depth studies must be carried out so the House can run smoothly," he added.

Former deputy speaker Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said had recently urged Putrajaya to fast-track and include her proposed recall election Bill as part of the proposed anti-hopping law.

Meanwhile, Dr Mahathir also described the appointment of individuals with ministerial rank as a form of bribery by the government.

Dr Mahathir admitted appointing several high-ranking individuals when he was prime minister, but added that they were apolitical.

"The position was given to those retired from politics due to their expertise in certain fields," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said the government must focus on addressing the hardship of Malaysians affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Once the pandemic is addressed, the economy will recover," he added.

Azalina had submitted a notice to table a Private Members' Bill titled Sacking of Members of Parliament Bill 2021 on Sept 3.