

# PM: ANTI-PARTY HOPPING LAW TO ENSURE STABILITY

NST  
- 28/7/2022  
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It will send a clear message to future party-hoppers, says Ismail Sabri

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**T**HE Constitution (Amendment) bill (No.3) 2022 and the Provision for the Prohibition of Members of Parliament from Party-Hopping will send a clear message to future party-hoppers, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob said.

Ismail Sabri, when tabling the bill in Parliament yesterday, expressed confidence that the much-awaited act, better known as the Anti-Party Hopping Law, would ensure long-term political stability in the country.

He said taking into account the various complaints and suggestions by politicians and stakeholders, the government decided to do away with certain items in the initial bill, which was tabled for its first reading in April.

This included politicians' com-

plaints that it would be unfair to define a sacked party member as a party-hopper, which would provide too much power to party presidents.

After seven meetings held between April 15 and July 12 involving the special select committee in charge of the bill, which included members of parliament (MPs) from both side of the political divide, as well as various stakeholders, Ismail Sabri said the government had set several parameters for the bill.

The first, he said, was that the act would not be applicable retrospectively, meaning that it would only apply to party-hoppers after the act was gazetted.

"A one-step approach is taken in introducing the law to prohibit party-hopping, which is to amend the Federal Constitution," said Ismail Sabri.

"A member of the Dewan Rakyat who exits a political party that belongs to a coalition, and then joins another political party, ei-



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob tabling the Constitution (Amendment) bill (No. 3) 2022 and the Provision for the Prohibition of Members of Parliament from Party-Hopping in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday. PIC COURTESY OF THE INFORMATION DEPARTMENT

ther in the same coalition or otherwise, ceases to be a member of the Dewan Rakyat.

"The membership of a Dewan Rakyat member refers to the membership of a political party, either it is in a coalition or not.

"Aside from that, the membership of a Dewan Rakyat member also refers to an MP who does not belong to any political party within a coalition, but is a direct member of the coalition party."

He said the usage of party symbols or coalition symbols would not be included in the bill as it aimed to focus on the action of crossing the aisle.

MPs who had initially contested under a political party but later decided to be an independent, he said, would be defined as a party-hopper.

As a result, he said, the seat must be immediately vacated.

But there are several situations that would be spared from the definition of party-hopping.

"A Dewan Rakyat member will not cease to be a member of the house if their political party is dissolved or deregistered.

"The removal of membership of

a Dewan Rakyat member from political parties when elected as the speaker of the house does not cause him to cease from being an MP.

"The sacking of a Dewan Rakyat member from their political party is excluded (from the definition of party-hopping)."

With all these in mind, Ismail Sabri said, the government was set to include several key provisions in the bill, such as providing the power to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to allow him to set the effective date of the proposed act in states with the consent of the Malay rulers.

"In other words, this paragraph gives space to the state government and/or state legislative assembly to implement the provisions prohibiting members of the representative houses from changing parties through amendments to the State Constitutions, subject to the consent of the king or Yang di-Pertua Negeri."

He said those who had party-hopped would be allowed to re-contest in an election.

On what would happen to a constituency after its represen-

tative had changed political allegiance, Ismail Sabri said the seat must be vacated and an election must take place 60 days after the Dewan Rakyat speaker sends a notification of unexpected vacancy to the Election Commission.

This would also apply to independent MPs, he added.

He said once adopted in states, the same would apply to state legislative assemblymen.

Another constitution amendment, he said, would be to re-define the words "political party" in Article 160 of the Federal Constitution.

"Paragraph Four (of the bill) aims to replace the financial implications of the bill since the inclusion of the new Article 49A and the amendment to the Eighth Schedule of the Federal Constitution will involve additional spending by the government for election purposes for the Election Commission to fill the vacancies in the Dewan Rakyat and state assemblies."

The debate on the bill by at least 35 MPs will continue tomorrow.

