

# The need for a worthy Opposition

**W**HEN the towering DAP veteran Lim Kit Siang (*pix*) announced his retirement from politics, there was an outpouring of appreciation from Malaysians across the board. Deservedly so.

For the last 56 years, Kit Siang was always in the background as a prominent Opposition leader, while he pursued truly valuable ends for the nation. He stood for justice against all his political adversaries, and to this end he was even imprisoned in the late 1980s for violations of the Internal Security Act 1960.

Throughout his tenure, Kit Siang, who was labelled as a "firebrand", was fearless and challenged every prime minister in power, ruffled feathers and tread on sensitive issues. And yet, he was no idealist but a savvy politician who was outspoken in public and Parliament, to defend the peoples' interests.

Noticeably, his opinions were pushed with a certain level of decorum, and dignified exchange of words and actions upon political rivals. His presentations were backed with unquestionable facts, common sense and wisdom.

Kit Siang became a secretary for the DAP and an editor of the party's political newspaper in the 1960s. Not once had he sought titles, power or wealth. In the true sense, Kit Siang belongs to Malaysia. His humility and his simplicity is legendary.

In 2018, he allied with Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and joined Pakatan Harapan (PH) to overthrow Barisan Nasional. However, when PH - was unceremoniously toppled by the Sheraton Move after 22 months in power, Kit Siang called it out as "an

undemocratic and unconstitutional conspiracy" He voiced the nation's disappointment when the voters did not get their mandate of five years.

It must be with great sadness that Kit Siang is leaving politics, without fulfilling his vision to build a new Malaysia in the 15th and 16th General Elections. Ironically, the present political scenario is patronised by the same old regime who he helped to overthrow in 2018.

Last weekend, Umno held their general assembly and pushed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabry Yaakob to call for a snap general election.

Clearly, the people do not want an election now, as indicated by the 46% of 2.6 million people who did not come to vote in the recent Johor election. People are withdrawing their personal savings and limiting consumption to cope with financial difficulties during the pandemic.

To this effect, in September 2021, Ismail Sabry's government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the main Opposition bloc PH-Parti Keadilan Rakyat, Democratic Action Party, Parti Amanah Negara and United Progressive Kinabalu Organisation.

Among other things, the MoU proposed to table the Anti-Party Hopping law, which deterred politicians from hopping from one party to another without a valid cause. The Bill, which was supposed to be tabled in the fifth session of Parliament in 2022, has been postponed.

Sadly, many of our Opposition and government representatives come from a cauldron of tattered and battered political parties who have a fear of losing their seats if they speak up.

With BN's success in the last state

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election, I believe some may be drawing their own "social contracts" with the winning party and may not want any law to curb this mobility. Because of this hopping, the last two years have consumed the nation's time, energy and funds with elections that could have waited.

Meanwhile, it is the Opposition that should act as a watchdog and push Parliament when a Bill of this importance is delayed. They should act as game changers to represent the peoples' interests.

Amanah president Mohamad Sabu had urged the government to table the Anti-Hopping Bill. These are voices that we want to hear.

We are at a critical juncture where we need both a strong government and a

strong Opposition. A strong and effective Opposition will ensure there is maximum governance of accountability.

We deserve both. We wish for more Opposition leaders like Kit Siang and the late Karpal Singh, who could shake Parliament while pushing for Bills in the interest of the people.

As for Kit Siang, perhaps he is setting an example for other senior leaders to retire while he mentors younger leaders to replace them. We hope he will shake up and motivate the youth to stand up fearlessly and be catalysts for change.

Nonetheless, the political landscape will be lesser without a man of Kit Siang's stature. No one can replace him. Not even his own family.

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