

**DAP's anti-hopping law against Pakatan's principles, says Dr M
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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 25 — The DAP's proposal to enact anti-hopping laws in Penang goes against Pakatan Rakyat's (PR) oft-touted support for freedom of association and liberalisation, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The country's longest serving prime minister today questioned the PR party's sudden rejection of political crossovers, saying it appeared to renege on the opposition's call for a more liberal society.

"They say they want to be liberal, to speak one's mind and to criticise people and whatnot by saying that is our freedom," the veteran politician told a press conference at his Hari Raya open house here today.

"So why do they want to prevent people from party hopping?" he asked.

Dr Mahathir said internal squabbles were common in all political parties and candidates would naturally switch sides if they were not loyal to a party.

"If they are born in the year of the frog, then they will jump lah," he said, drawing laughter from the crowd.

The DAP yesterday continued to push its proposal to enact anti-hopping laws in Penang although numerous defections from Barisan Nasional (BN) since Election 2008 have helped boost PR's representation in Parliament.

DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng said in a statement that gaining political representation through defections was "immoral, unethical and unprincipled" as it showed contempt for the democratic choice of an elected representative's voters.

He said an elected representative should resign from his seat and seek a fresh mandate should he choose to leave the party he had previously contested under.

"Democracy, accountability and ethical conduct demand that the voters be given another opportunity to pass judgment whether such a decision by the elected representative to hop over is acceptable or not," he said.

As an example, Lim pointed to the fall of the Perak PR government in 2009 when the defection of three assemblymen — two from PKR and one from the DAP — had helped BN reclaim the state.

But the DAP leader did not touch on the recent defection of Sabah BN MPs — Datuk Seri Wilfred Mojilip Bumburing and Datuk Seri Lajim Ukin — who left their respective parties in the ruling pact last month to pledge support for PR.

Lim also did not speak of PR's September 16 takeover attempt in 2008 when de facto leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had boasted that mass political crossovers to PR would see BN toppled from its perch in Putrajaya.

Despite the failed takeover attempt, the incident has continued to cast a cloud over Anwar and PR, and was raised again recently when Lim's DAP-led administration in Penang proposed to enact an anti-hopping law to prevent such crossovers.

When responding to the issue, MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek flayed Lim for the proposal, reminding the latter that PR parties have often relied on political defections to gain electoral power.

PR has never unseated any state government through political defections.

The veteran politician was quoted in the media as suggesting that Lim introduce amendments in his own party constitution instead of pushing for fresh laws to be enacted in Penang.

But Lim rejected Dr Chua's proposal, saying that amending the party constitution would not prevent coup attempts like the Perak takeover by BN or compel a defector to resign from his or her seat.

The DAP secretary-general said Dr Chua's apparent opposition to Penang's plan to enact anti-hopping laws only highlights BN's readiness to usurp power from its enemies through political defections.

Lim had said on Tuesday that Penang was looking to pass an anti-party hopping law during the next state assembly sitting in November ahead of the coming 13th general election that must be held by next year.

The Bagan MP had said this would mean any political defection must later result in a re-election to ensure that the democratic right of voters is upheld.

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