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Letter to the Editor

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**Malaysia cannot wait any longer for the anti-hopping bill to be passed in Parliament**

The Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) is disappointed that the tabling of the Federal Constitution (Amendments) 2022 Bill on Anti-Party Hopping in the Parliament has been postponed. We are looking forward to the passing of the bill soonest possible as party hopping has been rampant among the Members of Parliament (MPs) and even the State Assembly persons (ADUNs), especially in recent years. Such party hopping or re-alignment of loyalty is a blatant betrayal to the electorates' trust.

The electorate voted a politician basing on whom they want to represent them, and/or the party the politician is representing to serve until the next election. These are the reasons why a political candidate standing for election is identified both by the candidate's name as well as the logo of the party he is affiliated to.

One example of people voting for the person and not the party is that of the late C.Y. Choy. He easily won General Elections from 1969 until his death in 1980 at the age of 73 despite standing as an independent candidate for the Pengkalan Kota constituency after the deregistration of the Socialist Front which he previously represented. The residents in his constituency voted for C.Y. Choy because they respected him, appreciating his excellent service and dedication.

However, there are also instances where people voted for the party regardless of the candidate.

It is therefore grossly unethical for an elected candidate to switch party or loyalty after being voted in by the people in the constituency.

If an elected candidate is expelled by his political party, the person should remain as an independent such as the case of the former two-term Tanjung Bungah ADUN Teh Yee Cheu. Despite his disagreement with some of the state government's policies, particularly those concerning the environmental issues, he did not defect from DAP to any other party until after the dissolution of the Penang State Assembly. Only then he joined Parti Sosialis Malaysia in 2018.

However, if the elected representative decides to join another party, it would be proper for him to vacate his seat for a by-election to take place.

Independent parties should not be allowed to join any political party after an election because by allowing it, independent parties may use the votes they won to back parties that lost marginally to tip the balance of power.

On the other hand, the electorate themselves must be governed by the right principles and not go by party leanings. They must evaluate their representatives. They must be active citizenry, involved in issues in their area and constantly check their representatives' performance.

The electorate must not be waiting for handouts from their representatives, and for all the festival gatherings that are organised by politicians. Citizens should not need their MPs and ADUNs to turn up with ang pow (red packet) for weddings and bereavement money for the funerals of their constituents. The citizens' culture and their expectations also have to change too.

There has to be a thorough assessment on what our MPs and ADUNs are paid (e.g. allowances and pensions) and also the allocations given to them. The allocations given must be only enough to run an efficient and effective service centre but not to give handouts.

There are agencies and institutions to look after the welfare of the people. For instance, if there is a problem with the rubbish collection, the citizen must take this up with the Council since it is the Council's job and they have to act on it. It should not be the business of the representatives to take up issues of rubbish collection and stagnant drains.

The citizenry should also rise up and be matured only then can politicians be checked. The MPs and ADUNs must give quarterly reports of the work they have done, the number of times they went for sittings, the issues they raised in the House. They can do it on Facebook, their website, or via other forms of social media.

Party hopping creates political uncertainties and de-stabilises the country's political and economic environment. Moreover, by-elections are expensive undertakings that the country has to avoid.

On these premises we urge the anti-hopping Bill to be tabled soonest possible and supported by all MPs because it is going to restore confidence in the democratic system of the country.

**Mohideen Abdul Kader**

**President**

**Consumers Association of Penang (CAP)**