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Anti-hopping bill to be tabled in July, says PM Ismail

He says the government has no intention of delaying or not tabling the bill.

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Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob seen in the Dewan Rakyat in this file picture.

The government is looking to table the anti-party hopping bill during the parliamentary sitting in July, Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob says.

He said the government had no intention of delaying or not tabling the bill as there were several matters that needed to be resolved first, including the Constitution (Amendment) Bill (No.3) 2022 to be tabled on Monday.

“There are confused parties who are trying to play up the issue as though the government is not sincere in matters concerning the tabling of the anti-party hopping bill,” he told reporters after attending a special briefing on the Constitution (Amendment) Bill (No.3) 2022 in Putrajaya yesterday.

Also present were Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department (Parliament and Law) Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar and Attorney-General Idrus Harun.

The prime minister said as soon as the Constitution (Amendment) Bill (No.3) 2022 is approved with a two-thirds majority, or more than 148 votes, the government will set up a special committee comprising representatives from the government, the opposition and academics to work on and draft the anti-party hopping bill.

“I hope this matter can be expedited as the government’s target is to table this law during the parliamentary meeting in July,” he said.

Ismail also expressed confidence that Constitution (Amendment) Bill (No.3) 2022 would be approved.

“As of today, from the media statements we’ve been reading, the government parties are all backing it. The opposition, Pakatan Harapan, have also pledged their support.

“As such, I feel there is no issue here about the amendments not being approved. I hope what had been promised will be honoured,” he said.

Ismail said the government’s intention to amend Article 10 of the Federal Constitution was to provide for the tabling of the anti-party hopping bill in Parliament as without the amendment, the enacted law would be contrary to Article 10.

Article 10 provides for, among other things, freedom of speech and expression and the freedom to form associations.

The prime minister also cited a case in Kelantan in 1992 where the Supreme Court ruled as invalid the anti-party hopping provision in the Kelantan state constitution because it was contrary to Article 10 of the Federal Constitution.

Ismail, when asked, said that four opposition representatives were present in yesterday’s briefing.

They were Ipoh Timur MP Wong Kah Woh, Kuching MP Dr Kelvin Yii, Kalabakan MP Ma’mun Sulaiman and Labuan MP Rozman Isli.

“There were several opposition members who were present but I was made to understand they (the rest) were attending a pre-council meeting (elsewhere).

“Today is like any other day before a (parliament) sitting where there is a pre-council meeting. Today, although the focus is on a single matter, it is akin to a pre-council meeting as well,” he said.

Several MPs and members of the Cabinet and Senate had attended the briefing held at Dewan Sri Endon, Puspanitapuri.

They included Energy and Natural Resources Minister Takiyuddin Hassan, Housing and Local Government Minister Reezal Merican Naina Merican, Human Resources Minister M Saravanan, Defence Minister Hishammuddin Hussein and Education Minister Radzi Jidin.

Also present were Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Nancy Shukri, Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Adham Baba, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Religious Affairs) Idris Ahmad and Senator Ras Adiba Radzi.