

# 08 ELECTIONS

NOMINATION FEB 24 • POLLING MARCH 8

## Six endorse parliamentary reform initiative

by **Llew-Ann Phang**  
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

**PETALING JAYA:** Following its launch on Feb 1, the Civil Society Initiative for Parliamentary Reform (CSI-Parliament) has had an encouraging response to its endorsement programme, in line with a move to reform the current administrative system.

To date, at least five candidates for the upcoming 12th general election have pledged their signatures to the endorsement process. They are four DAP candidates – Edward Lee of the Petaling Jaya residents' association, Coalition Against Water Privatisation coordinator Charles Santiago, DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng's economic adviser Tony Pua, DAP non-governmental bureau chief Ronnie Liu – and Rawang independent candidate, businessman A. Chandra Segaran.

stitute of Malaysian and International Studies (Ikmas) associate research fellow Wong Chin Huat, who is one of 21 subscribing members to CSI-Parliament, told *theSun* that the organisation would also invite candidates from all other parties, including the Barisan Nasional.

"Letters will be sent to the parties and if the BN candidates agree with our goals, why not?"

"Endorsing CSI-Parliament suggests that you want better parliaments and state legislatures, and if you are the only one who does so in your constituency, you are the only candidate endorsed by CSI-Parliament which comprises the people," he said.

Furthermore, once BN candidates endorse the initiative, it would put them on par with their opponents where civil society approval is concerned, Wong said.

"It's actually very beneficial to BN at a time when its popularity is in a slump. It shows you are different," he said.

Upon endorsing the initiative, the candidates will strive to:

» pursue the goals of CSI-Parlia-

ment in promoting institutional reform and improving socio-economic policies when and where possible;

» hold regular consultation with CSI-Parliament and other relevant civil society groups to make the legislative process transparent, accountable and participatory;

» vote in Parliament or the state assembly on the concerns they are committed to when opportunities arise and vote in accordance with their promised platforms, even against party whips; and

» initiate or facilitate private member bills on concerns and matters relating to Part II of the CSI-Parliament Mission Statement (to promote institutional reform and improve socio-economic policies) as well as actively engage with the select committees in Parliament or the state assembly.

CSI-Parliament-endorsed candidates will also be expected to table private member bills in Parliament on the Freedom of Information Act/Enactment, water privatisation, gender equality, and amendment to the Town

and Country Planning Act 1976 to ensure an open and democratic school planning process to respond to the shortage and relocation of Chinese and Tamil schools, and local elections.

CSI-Parliament will also draw up a schedule for private members, including allowing sufficient time for consultation with the stakeholders in its preparations, and will expect all four bills to be tabled within the next year.

"The private member bills are crucial for two reasons – to make concrete civil society's demands in law reform and to allow the lawmakers to make their stand clear.

"The first will capture the public imagination and will no longer be vague goals. The bottom-up process makes politics participatory, while the second is so voters will know what to do in the next elections, making politics responsive," Wong said.

CSI-Parliament plans to focus its efforts on the successful candidates.

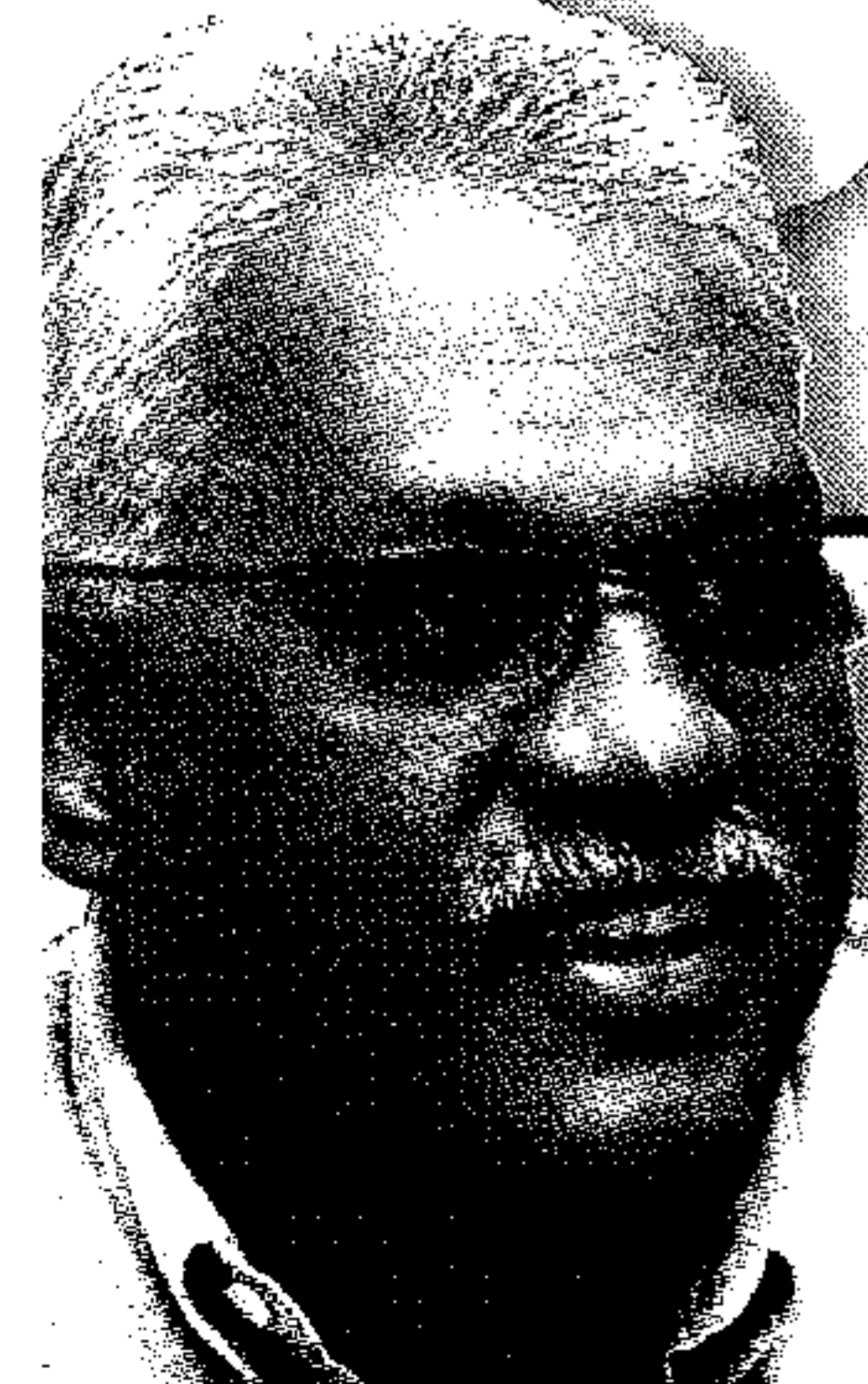
"We will engage them closely and ensure they table the private member bills they promised and other commitments in their capacity as elected representatives both within and outside the legislature," Wong said.

Also included in the mission statement is a pledge to uphold the principles of a vibrant, representative and participatory democracy.

The initiative comprises activists and concerned members of civil society such as former Malaysian Bar president Yeo Yang Poh, Empower director Maria Chin Abdullah, the Women's Candidacy Initiative's Zaitun 'Toni' Mohamed Kasim, the Centre for Independent Journalism's V. Gayathry, and lawyer Haris Ibrahim.



Lee



Santiago