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PM has right to watch proceedings

reports on "Dewan Rakyat" by Ramlan Said; Hayati Hayatudin  
THE Prime Minister, who is also head of the Government, has a right to follow daily proceedings of the Dewan Rakyat and Dewan Negara through closed circuit televisions (CCTVs).

Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tun Mohamed Zahir Ismail said the question of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad spying on the session did not arise as claimed by the Opposition.

"There is no spying. He has the right to monitor MPs' performances and Parliament proceedings. As Prime Minister and head of the Government that is his duty."

Mohamed Zahir said it was important that the CCTVs were placed in the Dewan Rakyat so that he could observe the proceedings if he was not chairing the session.

He said it was his right as Speaker to allow the cameras in the House, including those connecting to the Prime Minister's office in Putrajaya.

The cameras, five in total, are to allow Mohamed Zahir and Dewan Negara Speaker Tan Sri Mohamed Yaa'cob to observe proceedings when their deputies are chairing the session.

"The issue of spying does not arise as the cameras are placed for us to monitor MPs' performances, hear debates of a Bill and so on.

"When something happens in the Dewan Rakyat, I can take action based on what I watch on the CCTVs ... that is why it is important to have them," he told reporters, adding that the CCTVs were installed during the on-going session.

Earlier, Tan Kok Wai (DAP-Cheras) urged Mohamed Zahir to order the removal of the CCTVs as they were installed without the MPs' knowledge.

He said it was unfair for the Prime Minister to observe the Dewan Rakyat's and Dewan Negara's daily proceedings from his office in Putrajaya.

"How come the Prime Minister can observe daily proceedings live, while the public cannot?" he asked when raising the standing order on the installation of the CCTVs.

The standing order said the situation in the House was uncalled for and it undermined the Dewan Rakyat Speaker's privilege and special rights as well as the Parliament's sovereignty.

Mohamed Zahir, who chaired the one-hour question and answer session, said the Prime Minister was head of the council, therefore, he had the right to place the cameras in the House.

"I also have the right to allow outsiders to watch the proceedings or prohibit anybody from going in or out of the House," he said.

Tan insisted that the Prime Minister was spying on the session and wanted the cameras to be taken out immediately.

Mohamed Zahir then warned Tan not to argue with him.

"I'm exercising my powers as a Speaker to allow the cameras to be placed in the Dewan Rakyat and in the Prime Minister's office."

Later, when Mohamed Zahir took his break and his place taken by Deputy Speaker Datuk Lim Si Cheng, Tan and Kerk Kim Hock (DAP-Kota Melaka) again raised the matter.

Tuaran MP Madius Tangau was about to debate the 2001 Budget when Tan stood up to protest.

But the Deputy Speaker ruled that Mohamed Zahir was exercising his powers.

This did not go down well with Tan who persisted that the CCTVs be disconnected.

He later entered into an argument with several backbenchers, including Datuk Noh Omar, the Parliamentary Secretary in the Prime Minister's Department.

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