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Backbencher uses four-letter word in Dewan Rakyat

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - A four-letter word was hurled across the floor by a Government backbencher in the heat of verbal clashes in the Dewan Rakyat today. Barisan Nasional MP for Kinabatangan Datuk Bung Moktar Radin said it twice but neither the Opposition bench nor the Chair noticed the profanity, apparently drowned by the din of the moment.

The heated argument, during this morning's debate on the Supplementary Supply Bill 2001, was triggered by Chong Eng's (DAP-Bukit Mertajam) poser on the concept of an Islamic state.

At the height of the commotion, at least five Barisan Nasional MPs were seen shouting and bellowing at Chong to stop touching on the matter.

It was at this juncture that Bung Moktar joined the protest. Pointing his fingers at Chong, he shouted the four-letter word twice.

It is understood that this is the first time that such a profanity was uttered by a Malaysian lawmaker in Parliament.

Last year, an Opposition MP and a backbencher challenged each other to a fist fight when a debate got out of hand, but no obscene words were used then.

Approached by reporters later, Bung Moktar admitted saying the words but said he was provoked by Chow Kon Yeow (DAP-Tanjung) who made an obscene gesture at him.

"That made me angry and I lost my cool."

The matter did not end as Kerk Kim Hock (DAP-Kota Melaka) raised it during the evening session. He called on Speaker Tun Mohamed Zahir Ismail to demand an apology from Bung Moktar.

But Mohamed Zahir ruled that members should have raised the matter when Bung Moktar uttered the words.

"Bung Moktar has admitted to reporters about the incident and thus should apologise to the House," Kerk said.

Bung Moktar, who was present, stood up and admitted that he uttered the unparliamentary words, but explained that it was not aimed at the Bukit Mertajam MP.

"I will not apologise unless he (Chow) apologises for his gesture."

In today's case, the BN MPs argued that Chong's debate could lead to wrong interpretations as she was not an authority on Islam and therefore not qualified to delve on the subject.

Chong had earlier criticised MCA, Gerakan and Sarawak United People's Party for their stand over the Islamic state.

During the Sarawak election, she said, they declared their opposition to the creation of an Islamic state, but changed their stand when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir recently announced that Malaysia was actually an Islamic state.

"The three parties were telling the rakyat that the Islamic nation declared by the Prime Minister was a secular Islamic state. I want to know from the Prime Minister whether this is true."

The term "secular Islamic state" did not go down well with the backbenchers, who argued that it was absurd to equate secular with an Islamic state.

Pas MPs in the House, meanwhile, played spectators during the shouting match, with Datuk Kamaruddin Jaafar (Pas-Tumpat) and Mohamad Sabu (Pas-Kuala Kedah) calling for them to calm down.

"Bertenang, bertenang. Kita dengar apa dia nak cakap. (Calm down, calm

down. Let's hear what she has to say.)" But the appeals did not go down well with BN MPs, who chastised Pas for keeping quiet over the matter.

Among the backbenchers who took offence at Chong's comments on the Islamic state were Datuk Mohamed Aziz (BN-Sri Gading), Shahziman Abu Mansor (BN-Tampin), Datuk Mohd Ali Hassan (BN-Tebrau) and Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Noh Omar.

Datuk Ruhanie Ahmad (BN-Parit Sulong) called on Deputy Speaker Datuk Lim Si Cheng to make a ruling on whether Chong should be allowed to continue debating the subject.