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Parliament-Commotion

OPPOSITION'S BID TO DEFER TABLING OF OPP3 REJECTED

KUALA LUMPUR, April 3 (Bernama) -- An opposition bid to defer the tabling of the Third Outline Perspective Plan (OPP3) and the National Vision Policy (NVP) was today rejected by Dewan Rakyat Deputy Speaker Datuk Lim Si Cheng.

Nonetheless, the business of the House was disrupted for about 15 minutes even before Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad started tabling the OPP3 and the NVP.

Immediately upon completion of question time, Opposition Leader Datuk Fadzil Noor rose to move a motion to defer tabling of the Plan to allow MPs to go through the OPP3 Report distributed yesterday.

"The OPP3 Report is a vital document for the country in the new century. It cannot be treated as another instant roti chanai project," said Fadzil.

Lim however overruled the motion saying it was similar to the one the opposition moved yesterday and that copies of the report were distributed to all MPs, including opposition members.

"There is no provision requiring the report to be distributed a few days ahead of the tabling of the motion and similarly there is no provision that requires me to adjourn the meeting. I therefore decide that the meeting proceed as scheduled," Lim ruled to the applause of government back-benchers.

According to Lim, three days would be set aside for MPs to debate the motion.

"...but should the opposition need more time to go through the report, I propose that the honourable member take part in the debate on the second or third day," Lim said prompting several opposition MPs to protest against his decision.

Dr Tan Seng Giaw (DAP-Kepong) said: "...the first person should speak (upon tabling by the prime minister) should be the Opposition Leader, not on the second or third day."

Mohamad Sabu (PAS-Kuala Kedah) said that from experience copies of the such report were distributed three days in advance to MPs.

Kerk Kim Hock (DAP-Kota Melaka) questioned why the OPP3 Report was not accompanied by a Mapen report as was the case when the OPP2 was tabled earlier.

"Since there is no Mapen report, how about deferring the tabling to the coming Monday," Kerk said to the applause of opposition MPs which was shortlived as Lim motioned to Dr Mahathir to proceed.

Dr Mahathir complied and rose saying: "Honourable members wishing to defer debate can defer debating till next week."

His remarks were readily backed by government back-benchers namely Datuk Dr Jamaluddin Jarjis (BN-Rompin), Datuk Mohamad Zin Mohamed (BN-Shah Alam), Datuk Raja Ahmad Zainuddin Raja Omar (BN-Larut) and Bung Moktar Radin (BN-Kinabatangan).

Then cacophony ruled when opposition members Mahfuz Omar (PAS-Pokok Sena), Mohamad Apandi Mohamad (PAS-Jeli) and Che Ghani Che Ambak (PAS-Setiu) persisted with their protest citing the Standing Rule.

Visibly irked that he was being challenged Lim interjected: "If all honourable members want to cite the Standing Orders, I hope all should observe Order 42 that is to shut up when I speak."

Order was restored and Dr Mahathir resumed delivery of his speech but

was again interrupted by opposition jeers after he hardly finished the sentence: "As a representative of the majority of people in the country..."

A visibly emotional Datuk Dr Hassan Ali (PAS-Parit Buntar) rose and interrupted Dr Mahathir, saying: "How are we to debate this 200-odd page report given to us less than 22 hours ago. How are we to read and understand this report? Are we going to be just a rubber stamp here?"

Hassan's outburst again created greater dissonance with MPs from both sides involved in a mudslanging match.

After bringing the situation under control, Lim emphasised that his decision overruling the opposition's motion to defer tabling of the motion was final.

"I hope honourable members will not prompt me to act. A decision has been made, please abide by it," Lim said, again motioning Dr Mahathir to continue.

However, the prime minister suffered repeated interruptions forthwith until a point where he declared: "Any one else wish to speak, please do so..."

Kerk instantly seized the opportunity and repeated that tabling of the OPP3 and the NVP be deferred to Monday.

The prime minister, who resumed delivery of his motion speech, said: "This document is vital, for those who can read, it can be read within an hour."

-- BERNAMA

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