

Commotion over Mara loan default

Not 23 OCT 2002

THE Dewan Rakyat had to be adjourned for 10 minutes after a commotion during a debate on a motion to deduct Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad's salary by a token RM10.

Ministry parliamentary secretary Datuk Mahadzir Mohd Khir was debating when parliamentary secretary in the Prime Minister's Department, Datuk Noh Omar, called Dr Syed Azman Syed Ahmad Nawawi (Pas-Kuala Terengganu) a traitor who did not repay a Universiti Teknologi Mara study loan amounting to RM300,000.

The motion by Syed Azman that "the Minister had failed to perform his duties" was rejected by the Dewan Rakyat.

When Syed Azman resigned from UiTM and started work at Universiti Malaya, he was asked to pay back RM50,000 for failing to fulfil his agreement.

"The amount was further reduced to RM10,000. Yet he did not pay until the case went to court and it was decided that he pay RM5,000. People like him are an ungrateful lot," Noh said.

Syed Azman stood up and said Noh was getting personal and was not merely citing an example of a traitor.

Earlier, Syed Azman had said Musa's salary should be deducted because he was a traitor for agreeing to teach Science and Mathematics in English.

Syed Azman called Noh "*kurang ajar*" (ill-mannered) and wanted Noh to retract the personal statements about him.

Noh refused and in turn asked Syed Azman to retract the words *kurang ajar*. Several backbenchers,

including Datuk Bung Moktar Radin (BN-Kinabatangan) and Datuk Raja Ahmad Zainuddin Raja Omar (BN-Larut), stood up and urged Noh not to retract his statement.

Several Opposition MPs began shouting at Noh to retract while others asked him not to.

Deputy Speaker Datuk Muhammad Abdullah advised those present not to get emotional because he could not carry out his job.

He ordered both Noh and Syed Azman to retract their statements, adding that the case had been settled in court and should not be brought up in the House.

Syed Azman retracted the words *kurang ajar* but Noh refused to retract his statement and this drew more shouts from the Opposition MPs. Government MPs countered with more shouts.

Muhamad, unable to bring the house to order, adjourned it for 10 minutes at 11.26am.

On resumption, Noh said he would retract the personal comments but would not retract statement calling Syed Azman a traitor to the race.

Syed Azman later said at the lobby the backbenchers created an issue because they wanted to divert the attention from the crisis Barisan Nasional was facing with MCA rejecting the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English.

On his motion against Musa, Syed Azman said the minister was the "cause of the state of the education system in the country now".

He also called Musa a deadwood and a *pak turut* (parrot) who merely repeated what Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told him to do.