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Live telecast will not help Opposition, says member

A BACKBENCHER reminded the Opposition not to think that a live telecast of Dewan Rakyat proceedings would give them an advantage over the Government.

Instead, Datuk Mohamed Aziz (BN-Sri Gading) said the live telecast would expose the true colours of Opposition MPs who were only good at making empty promises.

"Don't think you will emerge as heroes if there is live telecast. The rakyat know how to differentiate the true from the false," he said debating the Election Offences (Amendment) Bill 2002.

He was responding to Mohamad Sabu (Pas-Kuala Kedah) who challenged the Government to telecast Dewan Rakyat proceedings live if it really practised democracy.

Criticising the Opposition for opposing the Bill which was aimed at ensuring fair and incident-free elections, Mohamed said restrictions were needed as shown by the tense atmosphere that prevailed during the recent Pendang and Anak Bukit by-elections.

Mohamed also defended Radio Televisyen Malaysia's decision to air video clips of speeches of Pas leaders, arguing its aim was to provide information to the people.

"How can Pas say we harbour ulterior motives when the videos are not produced by the Government or Umno but by the party itself? When RTM exposes the matter Pas suddenly feels hot under the collar."

To a contention that RTM should show the entire video instead of excerpts, the Sri Gading MP said the rakyat should not be bored with Pas leaders' rhetoric and antics.

He said it was no secret that the party was fond of distorting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's speeches and statements to serve its political agenda.

Husam Musa (Pas-Kubang Kerian) interjected that people interviewed for RTM's special programme on Kelantan titled Kelantan Dalam Gerhana had been paid to say negative things about the State Government.

He wondered why the station only looked to highlight failures whereas there were many success stories.

Opposition leader Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang (Pas-Marang) said the tabling of the Bill marked the death of democracy in the country. He charged the Government was not fit to formulate laws on ensuring incident-free elections as Umno could not even ensure its elections were trouble-free.

Hadi also called on Dr Mahathir not to turn election dates into a guessing game.

He said that in many countries, poll dates were known much in advance.

"But this is not the case in Malaysia. Some say this is because the Government has to consult the bomoh for suitable dates."

Education Ministry Parliamentary Secretary Datuk Mahadzir Mohd Khir dismissed Hadi's contention, saying elections had to be held every five years.

"This itself is contrary to claims that the Government is turning election dates into a guessing game."

Disputing Pas' contention on lack of democracy, Mahadzir said the presence of Opposition MPs in Parliament was proof the process was very much alive.

"If the Government was dictatorial, Pas would have been banned a long

time ago."