

Pandikar accused of conflict of interest
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Parliament speaker Pandikar Amin Mulia has been accused of having a conflict of interest by chairing today's tumultuous proceedings in the House, since he also chaired the Rights and Privileges Committee that recommended the suspension of Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim.

The Dewan Rakyat today passed a motion to suspend Anwar (PKR-Permatang Pauh) for six months for his statement linking Prime Minister Najib Razak's '1Malaysia' concept with the 'One Israel' policy mooted by former Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak.

The motion was passed amidst incessant protests from the opposition bench.

When Parliament began its session at 10.15am, the opposition MPs made numerous attempts to filibuster the motion to suspend Anwar.

It started with Khalid Samad (PAS-Shah Alam, left), who tried to query Works Minister Shaziman Abu Mansor over his failure to respond to an earlier question involving the troubled Shah Alam Hospital.

This was despite the speaker's order to the minister last Monday to provide an answer.

This led to the opposition bench questioning whether the speaker was able to uphold his own decisions.

The MPs accused Pandikar of failing to take action on Shaziman despite the latter's clear disregard of the speaker's directive to respond to Khalid's question on Monday.

Anwar then rose to challenge Pandikar, saying that if the speaker was willing to let Shaziman's transgression slide, then it would be feasible for the House to allow him to defend himself in Parliament against the charge raised against him.

Following this, Karpal Singh (DAP-Bukit Gelugor) said Pandikar had "lost the moral authority" to sit as speaker while the motion against Anwar was being tabled, since he also chaired the Dewan Rakyat's rights and privileges committee.

Responding to Anwar, Pandikar (right) said the opposition leader had been given one week to defend himself, sparking another round of heckling from the opposition bench, led by Azmin Ali (PKR-Gombak), who repeatedly wagged his finger at Pandikar while they denied Anwar was given such opportunity.

No reprieve for the chair

The speaker managed to quell the opposition, albeit for a short spell, to respond to Karpal, but the situation again erupted into a frenzy of shouts and protests when Pandikar explained that his position as chairperson of the committee was ex-officio, with no role in

the decision-making process or voting.

NONEThe heckling continued unabated, forcing the embattled speaker to ask Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz to go ahead and table the motion against Anwar.

At this point, the opposition members pulled out home-made placards, with words and phrases such as 'kangaroo', 'BN sokong Apco' and 'Selamatkan dewan, hidup ketua pembangkang' (Save the House, long live the opposition leader).

The non-stop heckling finally pushed Pandikar to cite rule 44 of the Standing Orders to bar the opposition from debating the motion against Anwar.

The motion was then quickly put to a vote, to which the opposition members protested and started chanting 'bohong! bohong!' (lies! lies!) before staging a walkout en bloc.

Three more senior members suspended

NONEAfter an opposition walkout, a second motion to suspend Karpal, Azmin and R Sivarasa (PKR-Subang, left) for six months over statements they made in connection with Anwar's case with the rights and privileges committee.

Among those who debated were Abdul Rahman Dahlan (BN-Kota Belud), Ibrahim Ali (Ind-Pasir Mas), Zulkifli Nordin (Ind-Kulim Bandar Baru) and Wee Choo Keong (Ind-Wangsa Maju) taking full advantage of the opportunity to attack Anwar and Pakatan Rakyat.

When it came time to winding up the debates, Nazri said that since no one from the opposition bench was present, there was no need to deliberate further and moved to open the motion to a vote.

It was quickly passed. With that, the four MPs will now be barred from the next parliamentary session, expected to be held in March next year.

Soon after the vote, the government pushed through two Finance Ministry bills - the first concerning the Customs duties arrangements between Malaysia and other countries with which it has signed free trade agreements.

The second bill covered the increase in excise duty on the sale of cigars in Malaysia.

Parliament was then adjourned sine die.

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