

Heated session of Dewan Rakyat expected
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After the drama on the final-day of the Dewan Rakyat sitting last December which saw four opposition MPs suspended, the next session of the lower house is unlikely to be subdued.

The row between BN and the opposition over several issues is expected to be continued after Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin, opens the first meeting of the fourth session of the 12th Parliament tomorrow.

With the general election just round the corner, the Dewan Rakyat is a forum that the opposition will want to exploit even without the four suspended for six months - Anwar Ibrahim (PKR-Permatang Pauh), Azmin Ali (PKR-Gombak), R Sivarasa (PKR-Subang) and Karpal Singh (DAP-Bukit Gelugor).

One issue that will be debated at the month-long session of the Dewan Rakyat is the decision of the government to buy six Littoral Combat Ships for RM6 billion, which the opposition has alleged is way too high a price.

The defence minister has promised to answer in full to the allegation, which defence analysts had said showed ignorance about the different types of naval ships and the increasing cost of building them.

Another issue that the opposition will pursue is the distribution of Bumiputra equity, with PKR secretary-general Saifuddin Nasution Ismail insisting on full disclosure of the recipients of the 1.5 billion shares allocated last year.

Saifuddin (left) has said that he would raise the matter in the Dewan Rakyat session to ensure transparency and accountability of the distribution scheme.

The 'Interlok' novel for Form Five students is another issue expected to heat up the session although the government has already said that those parts that the Indian community considered sensitive would be amended.

Two major bills are to be tabled, one to coordinate and determine the minimum wage for private sector workers and the other to expand 'publications' to include multimedia contents.

The opposition now numbers 76 in the Dewan Rakyat after the Padang Serai MP, N.Gobalakrisnan, quit PKR to become an Independent.

Gobalakrishnan delivered some heavy blows to Anwar, the PKR advisor, before he left.

With four members suspended, the opposition will have only 72 in this session of the Dewan Rakyat.

But the reduced number is not expected to quieten them -- not with the general election so close.

- Bernama

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