

## **Sparks fly in Najib's pay cut debate**

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**by Hazlan Zakaria**

Sparks flew in the Dewan Rakyat today as a motion to dock a month's salary from Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak was debated, with even Speaker Pandikar Amin Mulia losing his temper.

The motion was to deduct a month's salary of RM22,826.65 because of Najib's 'failures in national governance, Malaysia's declining image overseas and the prevalence of a slander culture being practised by his administration'.

Pandikar blew his top after he was provoked by the MPs during the debate conducted under Standing Order 66 (9) .

The motion had been submitted by Tian Chua (PKR-Batu) , who cited "problems and shortcomings" in Najib's administration.

However, it was rejected by a majority vote.

What angered Pandikar were interjections from MPs who did not seek his permission - although an infringement of Standing Orders, this has become the norm in the House.

Jeff Ooi (DAP-Jelutong) stood up to support the motion when Mohamad Aziz (BN-Seri Gading) reacted to his naming the premier's wife.

Mohamad said Ooi had contravened parliamentary rules on debate when he named a person directly and called him "bodoh".

Bung Mokhtar Radin (BN-Kinabatangan) was also heard shouting "bodoh".

The speaker initially said nothing but was pushed over the edge when Saifuddin Nasution (PKR-Machang) stood up, also without leave to "give an appropriate response" to the jibes.

The speaker hit out at the MPs, who he said often tried to "instruct him" how to do his job, when they failed to follow the rules themselves.

"Don't instruct me. You should instruct yourselves," he rapped out.

NONE In particular, Pandikar cited incidents of MPs naming persons in their debate and using words such as bodoh, saying such misconduct has become commonplace.

The speaker then pledged to "follow Standing Orders from now on, thanks to Machang".

The situation worsened when Tajuddin Abdul Rahman (BN-Pasir Salak ) shouted at Pandikar after being ordered to sit down.

"Sit down, YB!" thundered Pandikar, as he looked to address MPs who were interrupting Tajuddin without permission.

"Not yet! I am not done yet!" was Tajuddin's loud response.

Ordering all the MPs to remain in their seats, Pandikar scolded them: "Don't play with me! You can play among yourselves, but not with me."

Rule-change recommendation

Anticipating problems from the onset, Pandikar had set a time limit of 10 minutes for each speaker.

NONE He allowed Chua (left ) and a member of the opposition to begin the debate, to be followed by two members from the BN Backbenchers Club and a minister from the Prime Minister's Department.

After Chua had spoken, Pandikar suddenly told the House that he had an important announcement.

"This is important, I am not playing," he said, telling off noisy MPs.

He said his decision to allow the motion was based on rules regarding Standing Order 66 (9) , as well as an exercise of his discretion under Standing Order 100, since he did not want to be labelled as being pro-government.

He acknowledged the possibility that BN backbenchers may then submit a motion under the same rule to demand that the Opposition Leader's allowance be docked - which he would not be able to reject without being criticised for practising double standards.

The possibility of frivolous tit-for-tat motions, he observed, had left Standing Order 66 (9) open to abuse.

As such, Pandikar said he would allow the motion but with a recommendation that the rule be amended soon.

Standing Order 66 (9) provides for any MP to move for an amount of money to be deducted from any Supply Bill section, with at least two days' notice.

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