

Jahara: Democracy dead in Penang assembly

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The suspension of Question Time in the Penang state legislative assembly to "save time" sparked an exchange across the floor this morning.

State opposition leader Jahara Hamid (BN-Teluk Ayer Tawar) likened this to the "death penalty for democracy", noting that such a lapse has never arisen in the past.

NONEShe also said that Question Time has much to do with eliciting accountability of the state government.

"This is where we ask questions and get answers to the people's problems. It is based on transparency and it is the responsibility of elected representatives (to ask questions)," she said in debating the motion of thanks on the governor's speech began today.

"This session is not only for the benefit of all opposition members, but backbenchers as well and for the public good.

"It is clear that there is absolute arrogance of power here. It is like passing the death penalty on democracy. Democracy has died in this Dewan."

NONEJagdeep Singh Deo (DAP-Dato Keramat) interjected, shouting at Jahara to withdraw her remark that "democracy has died in the Dewan".

"You cannot say such things about the state assembly. (But) as you have said it, can it be accepted?" he stormed.

"You will be given a chance to ask questions during this debate session and answers will be given."

The argument started when speaker Law Choo Kiang explained that there would be no Question Time during the current sitting to "save time".

"This will not disrupt the session as it is according to the House regulations," he said, referring to the new session which began yesterday and will end on Friday.

However, Muhammad Farid Saad (BN-Pulau Betong) argued that "time cannot be

used as an excuse" to cancel Question Time.

"We have a lot of time. Please bring back the session in these proceedings," he added.

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