

Pakatan MPs booted out of audit report briefing
MalaysiaKini.com
Jun 17, 2014

Two Pakatan Rakyat MPs were today "booted out" of a briefing session on the Auditor-General's Report for the media and civil servants in Kuala Lumpur by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Paul Low.

PKR's Bayan Baru MP Sim Tze Tzin and PAS' Kuala Terengganu MP Raja Kamarul Bahrin Raja Ahmad Shah said they went to the briefing to hear out what Low had to say.

However, Low (right), in his opening speech, told non-media and non-civil servant personnel to leave the room.

"This was done by our own Mr Transparency itself," said Raja Kamarul Bahrin, referring to Low's position as the minister in charge of transparency and integrity in the government.

"If the briefing was going to be telecast live to all the media, why the need for such secrecy?" he asked.

Both Sim and Raja Kamarul Bahrin were initially allowed to enter the briefing but were told by an officer not to ask any questions.

But in his opening speech, Low promptly asked those who are not from the media and not civil servants to raise their hands. After the two MPs raised their hands, they were asked to leave the venue.

Sim (left) lamented that Pakatan representatives already do not have any avenue to be briefed or ask questions about the audit report.

"In Parliament we can't debate the matter and now we can't enter a public briefing," Sim said.

The official invite for the event also mentions it as a "public briefing" (taklimat umum) event.

"Low does not even come to Parliament to answer our questions. We probably only saw him once here before," Sim added.

Low, a former Transparency International Malaysia (TI-M) chief, was appointed to the cabinet after the general elections last May.

BN MP's, too, not allowed

At the briefing, Low had asked those who were not from the media or civil service to identify themselves.

"This session is between civil servants and the press, if there are any person who does not belong to that category, can I kindly ask that you (raise) your hands".

He then added: "This is not a political session... May I suggest you leave".

An upset Sim and Raja Kamarul Bahrin then stood up and left the hall.

Low reiterated that it was not only Pakatan politicians who were not allowed in but the same applied to BN.

In a statement later, Low said that the dialogue was "by invitation only" and MPs were not invited to "avoid any possibility of the event being politicised".

"It was a matter of principle. MPs already have a legitimate platform to raise questions on the AG's Report during each sitting of Parliament...

"(We) hope that the boundaries of this promising platform will be understood and respected by all parties concerned," he said, lauding the top civil servants for taking the brave step of participating.

Additional reporting by Nigel Aw

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Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/265962>