

Answer questions in Dewan, not blogs, PM told
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The prime minister should not “hide” behind his blog but instead have a proper session in Parliament to answer questions from MPs, a DAP parliamentarian says.

While speaker Pandikar Amin Mulia has proposed several suggestions to improve the Dewan Rakyat, what is sorely missing is a ‘Prime Minister Question’ (PMQ) session, Taiping MP Nga Kor Ming said today.

“Instead of hiding behind blogs to answer pressing issues, Najib should push for parliamentary reform and implement a PMQ session during the parliament proceedings,” Nga said in a statement.

Last Sunday after fierce rounds of criticisms from former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad and a call for a public debate, Najib finally broke his elegant silence and responded in a lengthy series of frequently asked questions (FAQ) on his blog.

However, Mahathir pointed out that the FAQs, which targeted criticisms such as the murder of Mongolian national Altantuya Shaariibuu and the 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) scandal, “didn't answer anything”.

Worse, the Parliament Secretariat's Office this week rejected Pandan MP Rafizi Ramli's two questions for Najib - on 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) and calls for his resignation - claiming they were in breach of Standing Orders 23(1)(h).

PM, minister's 'empty chairs'

Nga said Malaysia should follow UK's example in holding such sessions for the prime minister to address queries.

“The PMQ was first proposed by a procedural committee in 1959 and was implemented in the UK house of common proceedings in 1961.

“Malaysia inherited the Westminster system from the UK and there is no reason why Malaysia could not implement the PMQ session in our current parliament proceedings,” said Nga.

“By implementing the PMQ session, Najib would no longer need to hide behind blogs to answer issues raised against him.

“This would provide Najib, as head of executive, a legitimate platform to answer all allegations against the government such as 1MDB, NFC, KWAP and the PKFZ scandal,” added the DAP parliamentarian.

He also suggested the session be telecast live to “allow the voters to scrutinize whether the PM, ministers and also all the other MPs are playing truant or discharging their duties as the peoples representative to speak up in parliament”.

“At present, the prime minister and the ministerial benches were often empty during parliament sittings, this is most disgraceful, irresponsible and unacceptable,” he said.

The Taiping MP added as rule the PM and ministers should be present in Parliament to answer questions and reply to speeches “as a basic respect for the House instead of delegating the duty to their deputies or parliamentary secretaries”.

“Would Najib be brave enough to push for a parliament reform to promote transparency, openness and accountability?” he asked, calling for a bipartisan reform committee to study the implementation of PMQ sessions.

Idea surfaced last year

The idea is not a new one. Pandikar himself suggested it last April citing the Australian Parliament’s practice.

According to a Bernama report last April 8, the speaker while meeting Australia's deputy speaker Bruce Scott said it was “was suitable and timely” for Malaysia to adopt the practice.

However till today no such session exists in Parliament.