

## **Pandikar can't realise PM's question time just snapping fingers**

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Dewan Rakyat speaker Pandikar Amin Mulia's aspirations to introduce prime minister's question time in Parliament would not be easy to implement.

Despite being the most powerful person in the August House, Pandikar does not have magical powers to implement reforms with just a snap of his fingers.

Malaysiakini understands that first, the speaker will have to discuss this in the parliamentary reform committee that he heads.

When asked, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department in charge of parliament Azalina Othman Said told Malaysiakini the proposal would then be brought to the cabinet.

"The ruling government is committed to the parliamentary reforms... I will bring all suggestions proposed by the committee to the cabinet once they are completed," she said when contacted.

However this would be a significant hurdle for Pandikar. Last October the government torpedoed a proposal by Kluang MP Liew Chin Tong for such a prime minister question time.

Azalina's predecessor Shahidan Kassim at the time said this was because all questions fielded by MPs are already being answered either verbally or in written form by ministers and their deputies.

### **One more hurdle**

However if cabinet approves it, it should be smooth sailing for Pandikar except for one more hurdle.

Implementing PM's question time would require amendments to the parliamentary standing orders, said Padang Serai MP N Surendran.

This must be tabled in the Dewan Rakyat, discussed in the standing orders committee, which Surendran is a member of, which will then report back to the House for the motion to be debated and voted on.

The PKR lawmaker then pointed out that as a speaker, Pandikar cannot himself table the initial motion to make the amendment.

"The motion (must) filed by a member of the Dewan Rakyat. So obviously, it ought to be a government MP or minister, or the minister in charge of Parliament.

"Only the government side can bring the amendment because they have the majority in Parliament," he told Malaysiakini.

If the motion is approved, the rest would then be history.

### **Forcing PM to attend Parliament**

Pandikar has expressed an interest for there to be a PM's question time since last year, after meeting with Australian Parliament's deputy speaker Bruce Scott.

In the Australian model, the prime minister is required to the daily sessions in Parliament to reply to various questions submitted by MPs.

Surendran said this will be good for Malaysia's Parliament, as Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has had a terrible attendance record in the Dewan Rakyat.

"Only then can the Parliament function properly if the PM is in the House to answer the questions, especially from the opposition leader," he said.

Last year, Bakri MP Er Teck Hwa revealed that Najib attended Parliament only 26 out of 358 days from the day he became prime minister in 2009 up till June 17, 2014.