

MP fumes as Najib opts for silence while deputy answers

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PARLIAMENT Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, who also oversees the finance portfolio, remained silent while Deputy Finance Minister Chua Tee Yong responded to the posers concerning the ministry.

This angered opposition lawmaker Anthony Loke (DAP-Seremban).

"The finance minister is in the House, why does his deputy have to answer?"

"We want a prime minister's question time, not minister's question time," said the DAP lawmaker and referred to a proposal by speaker Pandikar Amin Mulia to have the prime minister answer questions in Parliament once a week.

Loke (photo) had wanted to know how much revenue in goods and services tax (GST) the government had collected thus far.

Seeing red, Pandikar told the Seremban MP not to rope him into the matter.

"Don't politicise everything... Don't drag me into this. If I want to make reforms, they would be my reforms.

"There is no standing order that if the minister is present, the deputy can't answer. Previously, even parliamentary secretaries could answer," said Pandikar.

Ruckus in House

When Loke attempted to defend himself, it ignited a ruckus in the House, and the speaker ran out of patience

"The rest of you, keep quiet," snapped Pandikar, and ordered the DAP lawmaker to sit down.

The speaker warned Loke that he would be kicked out if he continued to cause trouble and forbade him from asking any further questions.

Meanwhile as to Loke's original question, Chua (photo) said GST revenue figures will only be revealed on Friday when Budget 2016 is tabled.

Najib had earlier risen to answer the first question of this Parliament session, which was addressed to him specifically.

The question, from Noor Ehsanuddin Mohd Harun Narrashid (BN-Kota Tinggi), was

whether the government would transform the National Security Council to make it more effective.

Prime minister question time is one of Pandikar's proposals for parliamentary reforms, based on a similar session held by the Australian parliament.

Opposition lawmakers have lauded the proposal, and said it would improve Najib's terrible attendance record in the August House.

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

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