

## **RM2.6b reply and what to expect as Parliament sitting ends**

**MalaysiaKini.com**

**Nov 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

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In the past 21 days of the last Parliament session for 2015, stunts like the “Where is RM2.6 billion” placards and the “cari makan” joke by Public Accounts Committee chief Hasan Ariffin have coloured media coverage of the national legislative proceedings.

Malaysians also keenly followed the first round of voting for the national budget, where Prime Minister and Finance Minister Najib Abdul Razak survived the attempt to signal no confidence in him by voting down Budget 2016.

With just one week to go for the final session of the parliamentary sitting for this year, four crucial items on the list make for an exciting four days ahead from today.

### **Final vote - third reading of Budget**

The Opposition promised to vote down Najib via the budget, but Najib survived the first round of voting during policy stage by heavily crushing the opposition.

He garnered 128 “ayes” - just six votes short of a full government bench - against 74 “nays” from the Opposition.

Najib even enjoyed support from party dissidents, namely his former lieutenant and Pagoh MP Muhyiddin Yassin and Gua Musang MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah.

But the Opposition has its last chance on Dec 1 with the third reading of the Supply Bill.

The Opposition will need beef up its side while hoping for a miracle in the form of enough BN backbenchers being absent during its second bid to vote down Budget 2016.

The fact that the second reading of the budget was passed by a wide 54-vote majority shows that Najib has tight control over Umno and BN.

In other words, counting on BN backbenchers to cross the aisle is next to impossible.

It would be difficult to even imagine a vote that is lost narrowly, given the cracks in the Opposition.

### **The RM2.6 billion question**

The scandal involving the RM2.6 billion “donation” found in Najib's bank accounts has been a running theme during the proceedings of the House – from placards to grillings during Question Time.

But the government has done well in studiously avoiding such questions, merely replying

that the ruling party would answer all queries on Dec 3 – the last day of sitting.

Minister in charge of Parliamentary Affairs Azalina Othman (photo) also said that the issue would be answered through Question Time.

However, Question Time only allows a maximum of two supplementary questions.

By convention, the Opposition would have the first chance of asking the supplementary questions, followed by backbenchers, after the minister's first reply.

As Dewan Rakyat speaker Pandikar Amin Mulia has been very strict on disallowing additional questions after the usual two questions, the MPs will have to aim straight in their only chance to ask.

Azalina also declined to confirm whether Najib - the key person in the RM2.6 billion controversy - will himself answer these questions. This could also mean that the hot issue would be answered by his new deputy, Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, who is also home minister.

### **Nurul Izzah goes to Privileges Committee**

Lembah Pantai MP Nurul Izzah Anwar is under hunt, with the label "treason" pinned on her after self-styled Sulu princess Jacel Kiram posted a photograph of them together.

BN leaders have continuously been hurling brickbats against the PKR vice-president for her "insensitivity" in meeting with the daughter of the mastermind of the 2013 Lahad Datu incursion.

Despite Nurul Izzah's public apology, Azalina tabled a motion to refer her to the parliamentary Rights and Privileges Committee.

Already barred from Sabah after a motion was passed in that state legislative assembly, Nurul Izzah may now face more severe consequences, including suspension from the Dewan Rakyat.

### **Sarawak redelineation report**

With the Sarawak state election drawing near, Najib will be tabling the state seat redelineation report in the Dewan Rakyat, as required by the Federal Constitution.

The report will create 11 additional seats, bumping up the tally from 71 to 82 seats.

However, the Opposition has been protesting against the redelineation as most of the extra seats are carved out of BN strongholds.

They argue that the Election Commission's move will only strengthen BN rule in the Borneo state.

PKR has filed a judicial review against the redelineation, but the Court of Appeal and Federal Court have ruled against the party. This means that the constituency re-delineation exercise by the Election Commission is valid.

While the budget debate and vote are expected to finish on Dec 1, the House will then have just two days to debate the mountain of motions and Bills in the order paper.

This includes the motion of referring Nurul Izzah to the privileges committee, the Sarawak redelineation report and at least nine other Bills.

Malaysiakini also understands that the Standing Order Committee amendment will also be tabled to pave the way for Pandikar's long-held dream of parliamentary reform.

With such a pile of Bills and motions scheduled in the last two days of sitting - and the crucial session on the RM2.6 billion donation - it is expected that the MPs would have to endure sleepless nights to push these issues through. This will certainly be to the detriment of the quality of debate.

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