

## **Errant MPs apologise over sexist remarks**

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**Yoges Palaniappan and Soon Li Tsin**

Barisan Nasional backbenchers Mohd Said Yusof and Bung Mokhtar Radin today apologised over their sexist remarks made in the Parliament last week.

The apology came about after a 45-minute meeting with the Women, Family and Community Development Minister Shahrizat Abdul Jalil this morning.

Shahrizat was instructed by the cabinet yesterday to look into the matter which had caused much outrage among many quarters.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, both the MPs said they would like to tender their apologies, if "women were offended".

However they defended their words used in the Dewan as necessary to defend the government during debates.

They also did not issue a personal apology to Batu Gajah MP Fong Po Kuan, against whom the sexist remarks were aimed at last week.

Shahrizat meanwhile said no other actions were necessary against the two MPs as they have suffered enough criticisms from everyone in the past week.

### **Opposition manipulation**

"I would like to put all my ten fingers together and say sorry to all the women in the country if what I said in the Parliament had hurt anyone," said Mohd Said, MP for Jasin

"I truly regret what had happened on that day. The incident was manipulated by the opposition who pictured it (the incident) negatively, and made it look different from what really happened in the Dewan Rakyat," he added.

However, Mohd Said said that no one should try to question his duty as a member of parliament in championing women's rights.

"Even on the day of incident, I debated on the Anti Human Trafficking Act where I defended women and children," he said,

He added that women's organisations in his constituency were given fund allocations regardless of race and that he has worked to produce many businesswomen especially among single mothers.

Mohd Said justified his actions by stating that he uttered the remarks when he was defending Barisan Nasional (BN) when the opposition hurled unreasonable allegations against the government.

"When the government is insulted, it is every parliamentarian's duty to defend the government and its leader," he said, adding that it cannot be denied that MPs do use harsh and impolite

words to refute opposition's debates, but its done "because they are left with no other choice."

### **'We were provoked'**

On the other hand, Bung Mokhtar said the incident was blown out of proportion by DAP by highlighting it in the media and dragging along the women's organisations in the country.

"We don't have any intention to hurt women because as BN MPs we champion women's rights in the country," said Bung Mokhtar, the member for Kinabatangan.

He blamed the opposition for claiming it to be a gender issue, and the media for publicising the incident, which brought the involvement of many people.

"The words were uttered following provocation in the House. This is not the first time, it has happened before and we just defended the government and our leader," Bung Mokhtar said.

"I cannot avoid defending the government, there's no compromise for that," he added.

Bung Mokhtar hoped that DAP would stop toying with the issue and "stop selling old newspapers" as it won't be in demand anymore.

The parliamentarians, during debate last week on the lack of maintenance resulting in leaks in the Parliament building after heavy downpours, had attacked Fong who raised the issue.

"Where's the leak? The Batu Gajah MP leaks every month too," Bung said referring to DAP representative of the constituency, Fong Po Kuan on Wednesday

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