

Shaziman: Parliament won't be relocated
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After weeks of ambiguity, Works Minister Shaziman Abu Mansor has finally confirmed in the Dewan Rakyat that the government does not intend to relocate Parliament to a new building in Putrajaya.

Instead, the government will upgrade the existing building, during which time Parliament will be temporarily housed at the under-utilised Putrajaya International Convention Centre (PICC).

malaysia parliament parlimen building 050907 front“Neither the government nor the cabinet ever said that we will move Parliament to Putrajaya. We never did,” he said while replying to a supplementary question from Fong Po Kuan (DAP-Batu Gajah) during his ministerial winding-up speech.

Shaziman's response was a direct contradiction to a written reply by de facto law minister Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz on June 9, which states that the cabinet had already decided on a new building for Parliament at a cost of RM800 million.

This prompted a public outcry due to the sentimental value attached to the existing building, and also because taxpayers have to foot the bill at a time when the government is trying to convince them to accept subsidy cuts.

Parliament needs 'a facial'

Shaziman said that thus far, the Public Works Department (PWD) has recommended to the cabinet that repairs be carried out on the existing building, at a cost of RM100 million.

“The PWD only told the cabinet that the Parliament building, which is almost as old as me and maybe a bit younger than Pokok Sena (Mahfuz Omar, the PAS MP) needs to be refurbished, because there are some structural defects,” the minister said.

According to him, the proposed renovations will extend the life-span of the ageing Parliament building.

“Just as we, when the face shows wrinkles, we go and do a facial,” said Shaziman.

He said the temporary relocation will be necessary because the renovations will involve the use of heavy machinery, while there will be dust and noise from the activity.

“We don't want YB Kepong (Tan Seng Giaw of DAP) and YB Pokok Sena to be coughing when they attend Parliament,” he quipped.

Government U-turn?

Asked by Bung Mokhtar (BN-Kinabatangan) if the Parliament building is safe, Shaziman said there is no need to fear, reiterating that work will be done only to prolong the life-span of the building.

parliament gobind singh ban over nazri mistake 251108 04Fong interjected, citing Standing Orders 36 (12), to accuse Shaziman of misleading the House and cited Nazri's (left) written

reply.

The written reply had stated that the cabinet had decided on the relocation and that the current building would be turned into a museum after being repaired.

Deputy speaker Ronald Kiandee, however, dismissed Fong's claim, stating that he does not see any intention on the part of Shaziman to mislead the House.

Approached by reporters in the lobby afterwards, Shaziman explained why his reply seems to deviate from the written statement.

"As I answered earlier, PWD has found structural defects in Parliament. Based on their report, I gave notice to the cabinet on the need for repairs," he said, explaining that two proposals were then put before the cabinet.

shaziman abu mansorOne of the proposals was the temporary relocation of Parliament to the PICC after some modifications to the latter venue, in order to accommodate sittings.

Shaziman (right) admitted, however, that the second proposal was on the construction of a new building, if it is decided that the current one is too small.

he said the PWD has been asked to come up with a building plan.

However, he denied that a decision has been made and rubbished the claim that RM800 million has been earmarked for a new building.

"We are still looking at either using PICC temporarily or constructing a new building. No decision has been made yet. As you can see in the written reply, it was stated that the ministry will come up with a decision in three months after PWD submits its detailed report."

"That is still one-and-a-half months away. PWD is still looking at it."

He accused certain parties of sensationalising the issue, which he said is still being studied.

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