

Rights panel may decide on Azhar's fate in early August
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The Penang legislative assembly rights and privileges committee may decide on the fate of state opposition leader Azhar Ibrahim without the need to hear his defence.

NONESpeaker Abdul Halim Hussain (right), who chairs the committee, said Azhar need not present his views if the members feel they have sufficient information to issue a proposal to the state assembly.

The committee, which has been tasked to decide on whether Azhar had uttered seditious words in the May sitting, will hold another meeting in early August to decide whether to invite Azhar to present his views.

"This will be a one-time discussion to deliberate on the words that Azhar had used during the May sitting," he told Malaysiakini when met at the State assembly building yesterday.

"We will also decide whether to invite Azhar to the committee to hear his views, or we may not call him after all."

It is learnt that Azhar has been 'communicating' with fellow Umno assemblypersons who sit in the 10-member committee.

The committee members include Jasmin Mohammad (BN-Sungai Dua), Shahabudin Yahya (BN-Permatang Berangan), Jahara Hamid (BN-Teluk Air Tawar), Tan Cheong Heng (DAP-Padang Lallang), S Raveentharan (PKR-Batu Uban), Lau Keng Ee (DAP-Pengkalan Kota). RSN Rayer (DAP-Seri Delima), Zabariah Binti Wahab (BN-Bertam) and Azhar himself.

In the last meeting in June, they (the Umno reps) have reportedly suggested that Azhar be invited to present his views.

Chaos at state assembly

On May 6, Azhar created chaos in the state assembly when he threatened a repeat of May 13 while Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng was winding up the debate on the motion of thanks to Governor Abdul Rahman Abbas.

He had called for the army to take over from the police as the state no longer had confidence in the police, and warned that racial riots could recur if people lost faith in the government.

He had also mentioned a group called "tiga line", in a veiled threat that the gang would not balk at going against the Pakatan Rakyat state government

NONEAbdul Halim said the proposal whether or not to suspend Azhar (left), based on the findings of the committee, would be sent to the state assembly representatives after the meeting.

It is the legislative assembly which has the ultimate power to take action against Azhar, not the committee.

"If we feel there is no need to call him to present his views, we will send our

recommendations to the state assembly as soon as possible," he added.

Asked what happened during the last committee meeting in June which was kept a mystery from reporters, Abdul Halim assured with a smile, "This time it's going to be a short one".

On June 7, journalists waited for more than three hours to hear the results of the first meeting only to learn that Azhar was not present to give his views.

Committee members were tight-lipped about the meeting and refused to divulge any information

But Azhar was upbeat about his situation, saying the committee cannot pin any wrongdoing on him as he had done nothing wrong.

In response to this yesterday, Abdul Halim merely smiled and said "just wait for the results in 14 days time".

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