

Speaker gives Nizar the boot
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Perak Opposition Leader Mohd Nizar Jamaluddin was suspended from the Perak state assembly today after refusing to obey speaker R Ganesan's instructions to stand down.

While debating the Supplementary Supply Bill, Nizar's allotted 15 minutes expired but he continued speaking as loudly as he could, when his microphone was turned off.

NONE Although Ganesan had ordered Nizar's removal from the chamber, he refused to leave. The sergeant-at-arms stood next to Nizar but did not physically remove him.

After about 30 minutes of arguments, Nizar and his Pakatan Rakyat colleagues staged a walkout.

At the time of writing, the speaker had yet to state the duration of the suspension.

Ganesan had started the proceedings at 10am by reading out the new rules imposed on state assemblypersons - the ban on recording devices includes the use of cameras and handphones in the House.

They are also required to 'respect' the speaker and conduct debate in a civil and ethical way, also ensuring that their points are relevant to the debate.

But a commotion arose when Ganesan ordered the confiscation of a camera brought into the chamber by a Pakatan representative in defiance of 'new rules'.

This was despite an earlier assurance that there would be no disruption to the proceedings, as has happened previously.

The Question session got off to a sedate start, with Menteri Besar Zambry Abd Kadir replying Mohd Tajol Rosli Ghazali (BN-Pengkalan Hulu) about the deficit in the state budget.

NONE Ganesan then spotted Nga Kor Ming (DAP-Pantai Remis, standing in photo) using his camera, and ordered the sergeant-at-arms to confiscate it.

A short argument ensued with Pakatan Rakyat representatives pointedly referring to the speaker as "Datuk Ganesan" or "Chairperson", intentionally ignoring his title as part of a pre-arranged plan.

The argument involving Nga was settled without the camera being confiscated, but Pakatan representatives then began heckling and interrupting Zambry.

NONE BN representatives countered, and Ganesan was hard-pressed to keep order as barbs were exchanged across the floor.

As the spat continued, Zambry (right) accused Opposition Leader Mohd Nizar Jamaluddin (PAS-Pasir Panjang) of "twisting the facts" in claiming that the budget deficit would reach RM100 million if the Supplementary Supply Bill is passed.

Ganesan offended

The situation calmed down briefly before Nga locked horns with Zambry, expressing consternation that "this is the first time that a state government is so proud of its deficit".

Underlining this, Nga claimed that Perak is currently among the poorest states and that it has the largest number of poor families, with 192,000 earning less than RM2,000.

When he addressed Ganesan as 'chairperson', the latter replied: "I'm the speaker. While you are in the House, please use (this title). If not, I will take action."

NONEnga retorted that Ganesan (right) should wait for the court's verdict before claiming the title, referring to the legal wrangle over who should hold the post.

"Okay," said Ganesan, apparently acceding to the remark.

Zambry then refuted Nga's claim, saying there are only 764 poor families in Perak and that it is not the poorest state.

He warned Nga not to manipulate the figures and stop making false claims in the media.

Sum Cheek Leng (DAP-Bercham) asked how the state government is able to paint a rosy picture of the economy when a UN report states that Malaysia has experienced a drop of 81 percent in FDI.

NONEhis question was brushed aside by exco Hamidah Osman (left) who said the sitting is only interested in debating issues in the context of Perak.

Hamidah, who chairs the Industry, Investment, Entrepreneur Development, Tourism and Women's Affairs Committee, said Perak has received investments in excess of RM11 billion to date this year.

Zambry then tabled the Supplementary Bill, which seeks an additional RM80 million. It was later passed.

Refusal to stop

Ganesan continued intermittently to insist that the Pakatan state assemblypersons refer to his "official" title.

One of his targets was Nizar (PAS-Pasir Panjang), who used the term 'Datuk Ganesan' four times.

Nizar: Thank you Datuk Ganesan...

Ganesan: I've given you a chance to debate. But if this is the case, I will take stern action. Though my name is Ganesan, in the House, my title is (Yang DiPertua) Mr Speaker.

Nizar: Thank you Datuk Ganesan...

Ganesan: I'm giving you one last chance!

Nizar: Thank you fellow honourable (representatives)... [continues his speech]

In his speech, Nizar claimed that RM50,000 was being disbursed by Zambry to MCA branches in the state, which he claimed is an abuse of public funds for party purposes.

This prompted an emotional Nga to brand Zambry a "pelacur politik" (political prostitute), which was followed by another round of cacophonous verbal sparring.

At one point, Nizar called BN a "coward" for not allowing the press an unrestricted view of the proceedings.

The commotion only stopped after Ganesan reminded Nizar that the clock was ticking and that he only had a few minutes of speaking time left.

When Nizar's allotted time expired, he continued his speech with his microphone turned off by Ganesan,

while Khusaisi Abdul Talib (BN-Slim River) began debating.

Nizar ignored Ganesan's orders to sit down and continued his speech in a loud booming voice which even carried into the makeshift press gallery, without any electronic amplification.

After failing to convince Nizar to sit down, Ganesan ordered his removal from the House.

Quiet entry

Early this morning, Pakatan representatives met at the DAP headquarters nearby before walking quietly to the state secretariat building where the legislative assembly is located.

Noneled by Nizar, who smiled and waved at some 20-30 police personnel who were standing by, the Pakatan group posed for photographs.

They entered the chamber at 9.33am, while Zambry arrived at 9.55am.

Former DAP Malim Nawar assemblyperson Keshvinder Singh took his seat alongside other 'BN-friendly' Independents.

Some 50 journalists were restricted to another room with glass panels, from where they could only watch the proceedings via CCTV and hear what goes on via microphones.

However, they had to work in the dark because reflections off the glass wall forced photographers to request that the lights be turned off.

The CCTV visuals were also turned off later, with the audio-feed providing the only clue as to what was going on.

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