

Azhar: 'Accusations unfair, procedures not right'
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Penang Opposition leader Azhar Ibrahim said the accusation of 'uttering seditious words' leveled against him at the state legislative assembly in May was unfair.

The Penang state assembly person was referred to the rights and privileges committee which he met this morning.

Azhar (right) added that the procedure to refer him to the powerful committee was not conducted in a proper manner.

He said the right thing to do would be for a resolution to be proposed, debated, and only then a decision made whether to refer the person or not.

"However, this did not happen; the resolution to refer me to the committee was not debated when it was tabled," Azhar told reporters after presenting his case to the committee for about one and half hours this morning.

"But I am not going to appeal the decision if they find me guilty. I will instead organise press conferences and political talks to explain the issue," he added.

In May, Datuk Keramat assembly person Jagdeep Singh tabled a motion to refer Azhar to the committee, alleging that the opposition leader had uttered seditious words.

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 since the state had expressed they 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 Barisan', in a veiled threat that the gang would not baulk at going against the Pakatan Rakyat state government

'Not threatening, just reminding'

Azhar said he was asked to explain his allegedly seditious words before the 10-member committee which included Umno representatives as well.

He said he told the committee that there were 3.5 million members in Umno, but if all of them were accused of being gangsters and corrupt, there would surely be some sectors in Umno who would react to teach their detractors a lesson.

"I am not threatening, but just giving them a reminder," said Azhar.

He also clarified that when he mentioned that the army would take over, it was said as a response to the state government's lack of confidence in the police.

"They insult the police chief, saying the police have no training and are trigger happy. It looks as if the state has no confidence in the force, so I suggested that the army should

take over to maintain peace," he explained. "But I also reminded them that the army would use martial laws if they were to take over," he added.

Azhar, who is Umno state secretary, said he had previously experienced curfew during hartal and May 13, where the rakyat were only allowed to go out at certain times of the day, or else they would be shot dead.

"That was a very difficult and painful time, but those below 40 years would never know," he said.

Penang no match for Umno

Azhar also hit out at Pakatan Rakyat for constantly demeaning Umno, saying that the party's membership (Malays) were twice the number of the 1.6 million population of Penang.

"Not all Malays are Umno, but 3.5 million people is a big number," he said.

Meanwhile, the rights and privileges committee will inform the state legislative assembly of the action it will take on Azhar by the next sitting in November.

Speaking to reporters after chairing the committee's meeting today, committee chairperson Abdul Halim Hussein said Azhar would now his fate by then.

"Let's wait for the sitting," Abdul Halim told anxious reporters.

He also said that assembly members would be supplied with a list of words deemed "unparliamentary" in the next assembly sitting.

"If there are assemblypersons uttering these words, they should retract them or risk being ordered out of the assembly," he said.

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