

MPs grill Johari
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Bede Hong

Deputy Internal Security Minister Mohd Johari Baharum was assailed with questions, both by opposition and Barisan Nasional (BN) Mps, during his winding up speech.

This resulted in an earlier closure of today's Parliament session.

An hour into his 70-page speech, M Kulasegaran (DAP-Ipoh Barat) highlighted a scuffle between MIC and DAP supporters in Machap, where the nomination process for the April 12 by-election took place.

"How is it that no investigating officer was sent to look into the case?" he asked.

"It is apparent there that there is a lack of calibre officers, not only here, but in Machap. How can the ministry gain the confidence and trust of the people.

"MIC members were holding sticks and intimidating people. I saw a parliamentarian from this hall itself involved in such acts," he said, to howls of protest from BN MPs.

Kulagesaran then cited photographs carried by malaysiakini as evidence of the scuffle.

"Malaysiakini fitnah (slander)!" shouted Badruddin Amiruldin (BN-Jerai).

Bribery rampant

Later, Johari was interrupted by Tiong King Sing (Bintulu - BN) who claimed that bribery was rampant among police officers and the rising crime rate cannot be denied.

"Your own house was burgled! This cannot be denied! Satu dunia pun tau! (the whole world knows)" he said in reference to Deputy Speaker Lim Si Cheng.

"I want to ask the deputy minister, under these circumstances will the ministry take serious action or will we just tell tales here.

"The people don't see any change. There is no change. We only talk everyday," he added.

Tiong recounted a case in Sarikei, Sarawak, where a person had lodged a police report over a loan he had taken from a gangster.

He claimed that gangsters were waiting for him outside the police station and threatened him when he came out.

The gangsters told him that they would rape his wife and sell her off into prostitution if he did not pay, said the MP.

The BN MP said the police have a poor public image.

"Read the news. You will feel we have been projecting to the rakyat that we are not serious.

We just talk. The deputy minister will say 'anything can' today. Tomorrow, everything cannot be done," he added.

Overhaul image

Tiong, who previously told the Sarawak police chief to resign for failing to curb crime in the state, continued to highlight problems faced in lodging police reports.

"I have been told that if I raise certain issues with the police, I will be placed in a hole! The deputy minister cannot deny such issues," he said.

"For your knowledge, the Inspector-General of Police is now in Sarawak, he is looking into the issues you raised, I assure you action would be taken," replied Johari.

Tiong said there is a problem of people being blocked from making police reports or no action is taken on their reports.

To his, the deputy minister said such persons can report the matter directly to him.

"If it involves a rural person, where is he going to send the report? Putrajaya?" asked Tiong, who added: "He doesn't even know the way there. Even if he does, he cannot reach you, the operator will say you are busy."

"The Internal Security Ministry needs to overhaul the image of the police," he said, adding that the ministry has yet to commit to curbing gangland activities in Sarawak.

"I will go to Sibu myself," stressed Johari, who himself is being investigated over an allegation of accepting bribes to free criminal suspects held under the Emergency Ordinance (EO).

Abolish EO

Following this, Parliamentary Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Ipoh Timor) asked Johari if he agreed with the proposal to abolish the EO, which allows for detention without trial.

"There is no problem with the EO if it is carried out with SOP (standard operating procedure). If we follow the procedure there is no problem," replied the deputy minister.

Further inquiries by Teresa Kok (DAP-Seputeh) were greeted with jeers from the Jerai MP who insinuated that she was 'nagging'.

Meanwhile, Johari also spoke on how blogs and websites exist with the sole purpose of smearing the government's name.

He said a cyber crime unit has been formed to deal with such matters. The allegation against Johari had also surfaced on the internet.

Further queries were blocked as the deputy speaker postponed the session to be continued tomorrow morning.

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