

Sparks fly as soon as Penang assembly sits
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Before journalists could warm their seats in the Penang state legislative assembly today, several representatives from government and opposition began locking horns over several issues.

Today is the second meeting of the third term of the assembly and speaker Abdul Halim Hussein announced that the House would deliberate on 70 oral and 421 written questions, three bills and two resolutions, while the budget will be tabled tomorrow.

It is learnt that one of the bills to be tabled for first and second meeting would be the Freedom of Information Bill, before a select committee is appointed to discuss it.

One of the two resolutions include the fate of Penang Opposition leader Azhar Ibrahim, who is accused of uttering seditious remarks during the previous assembly sitting in May.

First to stand up after the session was called to order was Dato penang state assembly 201108 jagdeep singhKeramat assemblyperson Jagdeep Singh Deo (right), who wanted the speaker to explain why one of the questions raised by Seri Delima assemblyperson RSN Rayer on the lack of cooperation from federal appointed officers in the state was not allowed to be debated in the House.

Illegal sand mining in Balik Pulau

Jagdeep also complained that a certain state development officer - Nik Ali Nik Yunus - was allowed to join an Umno press conference at the party's headquarters in Penang, where he openly criticised Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng, calling the latter "rude and cowardly" .

Lim had criticised Nik Ali on his role in three projects - the arches at the Botanical Gardens, the alleged illegal sand mining in Balik Pulau and the stop-work order on the construction of the Defence Ministry's multi-storey air force school building in Tanjung Bungah.

"This is a very important issue," said Jagdeep, and insisted that the House allow the issue to be debated.

penang state assembly speaker abdul halim hussinHowever, Abdul Halim (left) rejected the matter on the basis that Rayer himself should have raised the issue, and that the matter should be discussed between the CM and federal government.

This prompted both Jagdeep and Rayer to demand clarification from the speaker, who persisted in his decision, leaving the duo flabbergasted.

Meanwhile, the issue of the elderly receiving RM100 and RM1,000 (for beneficiaries) as part of the state's senior citizen appreciation programme was also raised by Jagdeep, who wanted the Umno assemblypersons to apologise for 'lying' to the people that the money was 'haram'.

BN yet to return 'haram' money it collected

A controversy erupted regarding the fund for senior citizens, which Umno had claimed was

haram as it was derived from gambling sources, prompting several senior citizens from the Muslim community to return the money to the party's representatives.

However, these 'collected monies' have yet to be returned to the state government.

"Does any religion teach its followers to lie? And if one has lied, please repent," Jagdeep said, while his supporters thumped their tables gleefully.

penang state assembly 181108 phee boon poh Sungai Puyu assembly person Phee Boon Poh (right) then launched a long tirade on the senior citizens appreciation programme. Phee also riled up Seberang Jaya assembly person Arif Shah Omar Shah, saying the latter may have a name that meant "expert" (arif) but in fact, he was not an expert in any field.

Arif blew up at the remark, and demanded that Phee withdraws his comment for speaking out of line.

Phee refused and instead demanded that Arif be "polite" as the latter continued to speak loudly, with several of his colleagues joining in the fray.

'Many of them had spent the money'

The situation only calmed down when Penang opposition leader Azhar Ibrahim stood up to explain why the money returned by the Muslim senior citizens had yet to reach the state government.

He said some of the senior citizens had used the money and the amount returned may not tally with the amount given out by the state.

"It is not true that if we have collected RM100 from 100 people, there would be RM10,000 to return to the state," he said.

penang state assembly 201108 azhar ibrahim "Many of them had spend the money and were asking God for forgiveness now; they could only return perhaps about RM15, but we are in the process of collecting the money and will return it soon" he added.

However, Azhar (left) remained adamant that the state government had lied about the money's halal status.

"First the chief minister said that none of the monies came from gambling sources, later he said the state had two accounts - one for Muslims and the other for non-Muslims," he said.

"The one who should be repenting is the chief minister himself," he added.