

PKR whip: Question arrangement 'unfair'
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Beh Lih Yi

PKR today called for the independence of Parliament to be upheld in the wake of alleged government interference in the running of parliamentary sessions even before the 12th Parliament officially commences.
MCPX

This came after the party pointed out that opposition alliance Pakatan Rakyat MPs were not given their fair share during the 90-minute oral question-and-answer session scheduled to start on Wednesday.

azmin interview 260408 talking "The arrangement of the questions during the oral question hour should be done accordingly to reflect the ratio between the Barisan Nasional (BN) backbenchers and Pakatan MPs.

"Since Pakatan has 82 MPs and BN has 77 backbenchers, we should be allocated six questions and BN four for every 10 questions that are usually raised during the oral question hour," Azmin, who is the PKR chief whip, told Malaysiakini during an interview at his Petaling Jaya office last Friday.

Azmin, who is also Gombak MP, said a tentative arrangement on the questions list showed that Pakatan MPs were only given two to three questions during the oral question hour.

By convention, the House will use the ratio of the MPs from both sides to determine the number of MPs who will take part in the debate or during the oral question session.

Speaker must be fair

Azmin also claimed that little respect has been shown for the new Parliamentary Opposition Leader Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail (PKR-Permatang Pauh), who is also PKR president.

This is because Wan Azizah was placed as the third MP during the oral question hour while the first question will be accorded to Razali Ibrahim (BN-Muar).

The opposition leader or the Backbenchers Club head will usually be the first MP to pose their question to a minister under the convention.

The two matters were also raised by Azmin at a press conference held at the Parliament lobby this afternoon after the 222 MPs were sworn in during a three-hour ceremony.

"PKR hopes the new Speaker (Pandikar Amin Mulia) will restore the independence of Parliament and preside the session based on fairness," he told reporters.

Meanwhile, Azmin said Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi should end the appointment of Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz whose portfolio is to oversee parliamentary affairs.

Azmin, a first-time MP, argued that the executive should not interfere in Parliament under the concept of separation of powers.

"He (Nazri) has no business at all interfering in the process of the management of Parliament, we have to remind him on that," said the PKR leader during the interview last week.

'Ask me first next time'

Asked for his comment today, Mohd Nazri rebutted Azmin's argument and said his position was not meant to interfere in the running of Parliament but to ensure matters discussed in Parliament will be channeled to the cabinet.

crime public hearing 120707 nazri "This shows the government placed importance on the Parliament," he told Malaysiakini when met at the Parliament lobby.

"These new MPs should ask me first next time if they don't know (my role)," he added with his trademark sarcasm.

On the complaint regarding the unfair arrangement for the oral question hour, Mohd Nazri disagreed.

He argued that there was no specific formula, such as the BN-Pakatan ratio, to arrange the questions.

"The questions are not arranged based on you are opposition MP or not, everybody in the House is treated as a MP equally," he said.

The King Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin is scheduled to open the 12th Parliament tomorrow and deliver the royal address. The session will sit until May 27.

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