

**Fiery start for post-tsunami Parliament**  
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**Beh Lih Yi & Fauwaz Abdul Aziz**

The Dewan Rakyat today kicked off with a fiery question-and-answer session where top opposition parliamentarians crossed swords with both the speaker and Barisan Nasional backbenchers.  
MCPX

The temperature went up few notches during the 90-minute session after a number of controversial rulings from speaker Pandikar Amin Mulia and an 'unparliamentary remark' from Ibrahim Ali (Independent-Pasir Mas) which drew heckles from the opposition Pakatan Rakyat MPs.

The first 30 minutes of the Q&A session was telecast live through state-owned RTM for the first time.

From the onset, the Q&A session was delayed by 20 minutes after Karpal Singh (DAP-Bukit Gelugor) cited the standing orders to question certain BN leaders who failed to raise their hand during the swearing-in ceremony on Monday.

A shouting match ensued when the speaker said he had already made his decision - that all MPs were sworn in lawfully.

As first-time MP Gobind Singh Deo (DAP-Puchong) jumped to the defence of his father Karpal, backbenchers led by Bung Moktar Radin (BN-Kinabatangan) booed and demanded the proceedings to continue.

During the shouting match, the MPs traded insults with Karpal branding Bung Moktar "bigfoot" while the latter called the former "big monkey."

"If I am bigfoot, you are big monkey," Bung Moktar told Karpal when the DAP leader told the backbencher not to disrupt the proceedings.

**Speaker not following precedent**

At this juncture, Azmin Ali (PKR-Gombak) referred to the standing order and questioned why Pakatan Rakyat MPs were not given their fair share during the question hour.

wan azizahHe also complained that Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail (PKR-Permatang Puah), who has been appointed opposition leader, should have been the first to pose questions in the new parliament.

But Pandikar argued that he was using his discretion as House speaker to decide on who shall pose the first question.

"It is not stated in the standing order (that the opposition leader must speak first)," said the speaker, adding that he was only informed of Wan Azizah being made the new opposition leader through an official letter yesterday.

bm version percentage of seats in parliamentAt the beginning of the session this morning, the speaker affirmed Wan Azizah as the new opposition leader after being informed that Pakatan MPs had given this their unanimous support.

When calm was restored 20 minutes later, Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi took the first question from Razali Ibrahim (BN-Muar) and answered at length on the government's approach to improving the quality of life in Malaysia.

However, another shouting match followed when Pandikar said he would not allow any supplementary questions to be raised on the grounds that Abdullah's answer was sufficient.

Under the standing orders, up to three supplementary questions can be asked for each question.

lim kit siang 02Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Ipoh Timor) protested, saying this was unprecedented and that such an action would render the premier's presence in the House "pointless."

"This is a conspiracy to silent the opposition MPs," said the veteran politician, to which opposition MPs thumped the tables in support.

As the debate between the speaker and the Pakatan MPs ensued, Abdullah interjected and appealed to the speaker to consider one or two supplementary questions.

The speaker finally relented and allowed one supplementary question which went to Abdul Hadi Awang (PAS-Marang).

### **Wheelchair-bound Karpal attacked**

Another commotion erupted moments later when Independent MP Ibrahim questioned why Karpal, who is wheelchair-bound, did not ask permission from the House to allow him to speak without having to stand up.

This led Azmin and Fong Po Kuan (DAP-Batu Gajah) to demand the sole independent MP who contested on a PAS ticket to retract the statement.

"When people speak, I never disturb them. After speaking just a little bit, she (Fong) goes melenteng (shoots her mouth off)," said Ibrahim.

ibrahim aliTurning to Fong, who was still speaking, he said: "Shut up."

"I am an independent member of parliament. Even when my name was raised just now, I did not say anything. I behaved. I did not speak just now just because I wanted to be a world-class parliamentarian. That's all," he added.

Ibrahim, who was warned by the speaker to refrain from using 'unparliamentary words', also refused to apologise when asked to do so by Azmin.

"What unparliamentary words have I used? I just said shut-up. The word shut up in Malay means diam."

Shifting his focus to Karpal, Ibrahim said: "You insulted certain people just now. From time to time when people insult you, accept it. Just be a gentleman."

"I agree with the speaker, but who is it that is being un-parliamentarian? This whole past hour is just because all these people want to get on TV. That's all!"

### **Word-limit issue**

Later on, Bandar Kuching MP Chong Chieng Jen stirred another commotion when he pointed out that the second question - posed by Bung to Rural and Regional Development Minister Muhammad Muhd Taib exceeded the 40-word limit.

"I counted, there are 50 words," he said, calling on the speaker to nullify the question.

This riled up the BN backbenchers who questioned Chong if he had really counted the number of words in Bung's question.

khairy jamaluddinFollowing this, Rembau MP Khairy Jamaluddin joined in the fray. He said the opposition leader herself had exceeded the word-limit in her question to the finance minister.

"I have already counted the words in the question of Opposition leader Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and there are more than 50," he said.

"This proves the hypocrisy of the opposition who do not count the words in their own questions ... (It's a case of) double standards! The pot calling the kettle black!"

The speaker, who was struggling to set the House in order, repeatedly called on the MPs to focus on the issues and not be sidetracked.

"I won't entertain anymore trivial requests ... I have to ensure the smooth running of the session," he said.

In the end, only three questions were asked during the 90-minute session as opposed to at least 10 if the session had proceeded uninterrupted.

### **Review telecast**

Outside the House later, PAS deputy president Nasharuddin Mat Isa (PAS-Bachok) said Ibrahim is an independent MP although he had contested on a PAS ticket.

parliament karpal and bung mokhtar big foot and monkey 300408Due to this, he said, Ibrahim is not confined by the party's whip and is not involved in the discussions or meetings of Pakatan MPs.

On the other hand, the Kinabatangan MP also greeted Karpal outside the House.

"I was surprised why you suddenly called me a bigfoot," Bung told the DAP national chairperson who did not reply.

After the rowdy session, a disappointed Information Minister Ahmad Shabery Cheek said the ministry would review whether or not to continue the live telecast.

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