

Khairy's 'planted' NEP question causes a stir
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A question from Khairy Jamaluddin (BN-Rembau) on the New Economic Policy (NEP) stirred up a row in Parliament today when the opposition accused him to have prepared the answer for a minister.

MCPX

The opposition MPs made the noisy protest during the question session this morning after Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Amirsham A Aziz was seen reading out a prepared answer to a supplementary question from Khairy.

khairy jamaluddin interview 011107 firmKhairy, in his original question, has asked whether the government is planning to change existing policies which were formulated based on the NEP spirit, especially those related to assisting the bumiputera, in line with the opposition's call to reject the policy.

Answering, Amirsham said the government will continue with policies based on the NEP, which was implemented in 1970, as it will help to ensure an equal participation of different races in the economy if the NEP spirit is achieved.

"The government has no plans to change the policies formulated based on the NEP spirit which is aimed to enhance the standard of socio-economy not only for the bumiputeras but also the Indians, the indigenous people and the minorities in Sabah and Sarawak," said the minister.

The controversy then started when Khairy, in following up the earlier question, asked Amirsham over a statement made by the Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng (DAP-Bagan) on the NEP.

"The Bagan MP has said the NEP breeds corruption, cronyism and systemic inefficiency. Is this a fair statement or just a general conclusion?" he asked.

He added that the NEP has produced various professionals including Amirsham, a former Maybank chief executive officer who made a career jump after being sworn in as a senator two months ago and brought into the cabinet.

"Isn't that statement was implying all of us as crony and kaki rasuah (corrupted)? Is this fair? Is this fair?" the Rembau MP asked in the supplementary question.

Guan Eng not right on NEP

Two supplementary questions are usually allocated to each question during the question session.

The ministers or their deputies are usually have to answer the supplementary questions off the cuff as they are asked on the spot by MPs chosen by the speaker randomly, unlike the original question which gave them sufficient notice to prepare for the answer.

Amirsham Abdul Aziz Amirsham, a former banker-turned-minister, who stood up to reply Khairy at this juncture nevertheless came prepared and read out his answer from a written text in reply to the Rembau MP.

"The statement by (Guan Eng) was not accurate at all and showed that he did not understand the objectives of the NEP," the first-time minister, who oversees the Economic Planning Unit, told the House.

As he went on to elaborate how the NEP has benefitted the people generally including creating more employment opportunities, the opposition MPs led by Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Ipoh Timor) protested.

"The answer has been prepared!" thundered Kit Siang, who is also the father of Guan Eng, who was not present in the House this morning.

This prompted a number of other opposition MPs to join in the fray, with Chong Eng (DAP-Bukit Mertajam) calling it a "planted question" and Khalid Abdul Samad (PAS-Shah Alam) shouted "the question was leaked!"

"Siap jawapan sampai dua muka! (The answer was so prepared that it runs into two pages)," quipped Mahfuz Omar (PAS-Pokok Sena) and echoed by Gobind Singh Deo (DAP-Puchong), while some shouted "cronies, cronies".

Amirsham nevertheless completed reading out his answer amid the loud protest and deputy speaker Ronald Kiandee picked Prof P Ramasamy (DAP-Batu Kawan) to ask the second supplementary question.

"See whether he can answer the question now," an opposition MP said to the cheers from the opposition's bench.

Rembau MP the 'pengerusi pasar'

Ramasamy asked the minister whether he understand the true spirit of affirmative action policy.

dap baju kurung pc 140206 p ramasamy "In other countries, it is meant to help the minorities who are marginalised but in Malaysia, it is used to help the majority, have we diverted from the basic principle of affirmative action policy?" asked the Batu Kawan MP, who is also Penang deputy chief minister.

All eyes were on Amirsham at this point who, expectedly, has to answer Ramasamy's question without a prepared answer, leading to the jeers from the opposition.

He then gave a two-line answer to Ramasamy, arguing that the NEP has fulfilled the criteria as an affirmative action policy since it helped to eliminate poverty and gives equal opportunities to Malaysians.

The controversy was not over even though the question was over at this point, when Abdul Ghapur Salleh (BN-Kalabakan) said the shouting match turned the House into a pasar (market).

azmin interview 260408 talking When Ronald told Abdul Ghapur that the situation was under

control, Kit Siang did not let up on the earlier controversy, saying: "It can't be too under control to the extent that the minister has to give the answer prepared by (Khairy)."

Azmin Ali (PKR-Gombak) (right) who was called to ask the next question quipped: "This House has become a pasar because Rembau is the pengerusi pasar (the market's head)."

Khairy, citing the standing orders, tried to protest over Azmin's remark but to no avail. Calm restored when the deputy speaker told Azmin to proceed with his question.

Minister is smart

When met later at Parliament lobby, Khairy rejected claims that of preparing the answer for the minister today.

"The opposition don't want to listen to question, they don't want an answer and they don't like the truth," he said.

"It is not planted, it's a supplementary question that I asked. The minister is a very intelligent man. I sure he has anticipated what might be the question," he added.

"I think it clear they are afraid of the substance that is there," added Khairy.

In some countries, such pre-arranged questions in Parliament are called 'Dorothy Dixier', where a minister get a backbencher to ask a pre-arranged question which can be answered in such a way to either praise the government or attack the opposition.

The term originates from Dix - an Australian columnist - who has the reputation of making up her own questions for advice columns to allow her to publish more interesting answers.

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