

Of 'Umno-phobia', floods and warnings
Malaysiakini.com
Nov 20, 2008
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A fiery exchange erupted between the opposition leader and a government backbencher forcing Speaker Abdul Halim Hussain to issue verbal warnings to the duo.

penang state assembly 201108 azhar ibrahimBarisan Nasional's Azhar Ibrahim (Umno-Penaga) and Pakatan Rakyat's Jagdeep Singh Deo (DAP-Datuk Keramat) locked horns over the prolonged delay of a flood mitigation project.

"Do not disrupt the proceedings. I do not wish to issue a second warning," the speaker told the two representatives, who then sat down and allowed executive councillor Law Choo Kiang (PKR-Bukit Tambun) to wrap up his winding-up speech on the state Budget 2009 yesterday.

The 20-minute argument between Azhar and Jagdeep, which nearly brought the House to a standstill, started when the DAP politician interjected Law's speech and slammed Umno officials for delaying a proposed flood mitigation project in Sungai Pinang under the Datuk Keramat constituency.

Jagdeep accused Azhar, who was in charge of flood mitigation projects during the previous BN administration, for not expediting the relocation of 150 families living along the river to accelerate the urgent project.

The nearly RM15 million project was to be funded by a RM10 million federal allocation, with the rest coming from the state coffer.

"The project is imperative to solve the flood problem in the area. But, as usual, the previous administration dominated by Umno took its own time and delayed the project," said Jagdeep.

Why the Umno-phobia?

However, Azhar responded that the previous state government had carried out all the necessary groundwork for the project and now it was the duty of Pakatan to implement it.

Since Penangites have rejected BN and Umno's governance, the opposition leader said the onus is now on the new government to carry out their work to do good for the people.

"Pakatan representatives need not harp on the past governance. If the past government had done something wrong, just correct it and go ahead with your projects," he said.

Jagdeep then said he was merely revealing the facts of the project status and could not understand why Azhar was 'deeply hurt' to hear the truth.

At this juncture, Azhar sprang from his chair and said he was not hurt by the accusation but was merely questioning why Pakatan assemblypersons indulged in 'Umno-phobia.'

"What's the problem here? Why is Umno always being blamed for everything?" asked Azhar,

sparkling off the heated exchange.

Earlier, Shabudin Yahya (Umno-Permatang Berangan) explained to the House that the previous government did all the hard work to map out the project and had carried out all technical work for it now to be in the final stage of implementation.

He also explained that the state Islamic Religious Affairs Council, which he helms, alienated a plot of land to the state government in the last term to expedite the relocation of the residents.

"The project was to be implemented this term, but too bad that BN lost.

"Now Pakatan merely needs to negotiate with the federal government to secure the remaining funds and carry it out," he said, referring to the RM5 million that the previous administration had received from the federal government.

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