

Anwar must explain Apco remarks tomorrow
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Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim will have to explain his remarks tomorrow on the alleged link between public relations firm Apco, 'One Israel' and '1Malaysia'.

Deputy speaker Ronald Kiandee insisted on this today, despite fellow deputy speaker Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar (left) admitting that he may have been incorrect in allowing Kota Belud MP Abdul Rahman Dahlan to cite Standing Order 37(1) in questioning Anwar's remarks.

Wan Junaidi admitted that the Standing Order is only applicable to remarks of a member of the House who has the floor. Issues raised by other MPs and matters already passed are not subject to the provision.

He said this when commenting on an earlier issue when Pasir Mas MP Ibrahim Ali stood up to call for action to be taken against Machang parliamentarian Saifuddin Nasution for alleging that the independent once held shares in a gambling company.

On March 22, Abdul Rahman had cited Orders 37(1) and 36 (12) to accuse Anwar of misleading the House in claiming that the federal government has employed a public relations firm which conceptualised the 'One Israel' campaign.

Order 37(1) allows any member of the House to interrupt proceedings in order to bring attention to a matter which is in breach of the Standing Orders.

Order 36(12) provides for any member who has misled the Dewan Rakyat to be cited for contempt and be referred to the Rights and Privileges Committee.

When Kiandee took over to chair the sitting later, he was asked about the issue by Anwar (right) who questioned the double standards.

"Is this a special law just for Permatang Pauh?"

In answering, Kiandee did not say that he disagreed with Wan Junaidi, but said that he will discuss the matter with his colleague and clarify the issue later.

Anwar and opposition MPs went on to question the use of Order 37(1) by Abdul Rahman on Anwar over a matter that was already passed at the time.

Gombak parliamentarian Azmin Ali repeatedly quizzed Kiandee under what Standing Order was Anwar being asked to reply on his remark.

Kangar MP Mohd Radzi Sheikh Ahmad also stood up in support of Kiandee saying that the Speaker has the authority to decide on all matters with regards to Standing Orders.

'Law of the jungle'

This drew the ire of Ipoh Timur MP Lim Kit Siang who said that if the Speaker could decide on everything, then he feared that the Dewan may be susceptible to the "law of the jungle" where everything goes.

Kiandee however maintained that he had 'inheritance powers' to decide on the matter, and held his ground, saying, "This is my decision. He has one week to answer."

Pakatan MPs then stood up to argue that since order 37(1) does not apply, it was up to Anwar whether he wanted to answer or not.

Kiandee conceded, "if Permatang Pauh does not want provide an explanation by tomorrow, it is up to him."

However he did not comment if this meant that the government would not continue with their threat to refer the oposition leader to the powerful rights and privileges committee over his Apco remark.

This is another issue in a long line of opposition grouses over what they claim to be double standards in the way that the opposition MPs are treated as opposed to the allegedly preferential treatment for BN parliamentarians.

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