

QUITE a few MPs are still speculating on why Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz left the Dewan Rakyat on Monday without completing his 80-page roundup of the general debate on Budget 2007.

He did not leave in a huff and neither was there anger on his face. In fact he even smiled at a few BN backbenchers as he made his way out of the House, leaving almost everyone quite nonplussed by his behaviour.

In fact DAP MPs felt quite insulted by Nazri's turning his back on them after doggedly reading his speech at breakneck speed, seemingly oblivious to their requests for *penjelasan* (clarification) on his replies relating to, among other things, the tsunami fund, the leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and the role of Umno Youth deputy leader Khairy Jamaludin.

Others, especially BN MPs, were quite annoyed because – even though the minister said he would give his speech to those who wanted them – much of the responses to the queries they made would not be recorded in the Hansard.

There was pandemonium and complete bedlam as everyone spoke at the same

# The Nazri exit mystery

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## At the Dewan Rakyat

by **Zainon Ahmad**  
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

time – Nazri reading his speech with DAP MPs shouting for *penjelasan* and making loud remarks that “he is out of control”, BN backbenchers shouting back at the oppositionists to *keluar* and deputy speaker Datuk Lim Si Cheng shouting *cukuplah, cukuplah* as he strove to restore order.

When order returned, things started getting out of hand again when Nazri was arguing with **Fong Po Kuan (DAP-Batu Gajah)** over the use of such unparliamentary words such as *kurang ajar* and *pekak*. Lim then called for everyone's cooperation to maintain order in the House or he was going to limit the time for the minister's reply.

When Fong said it was fine with her, Nazri said “if you want me to stop, I'll stop. I'll stop. I'll stop now”. The deputy speaker said Nazri

should finish his speech and asked for the number of pages he had left.

When Nazri told him 60, Lim asked

whether half an hour would be sufficient.

Nazri: I can finish now.

Lim: Can you finish in half an hour? I leave it to you. Can you finish it in half an hour?

Nazri: *Sekarang boleh habis.*

Lim: It's up to you.

Nazri: Mr Speaker, since my speech is very long and since it will be distributed to those interested, I now end my rounding up. Thank you.

Lim: *Sudah habis?* Baik.

Why did Nazri do what he did? Was he hounded out of the Dewan by Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang and his band of 11 DAP men and women who were plainly quite irritated and angry with Nazri for ignoring their pleas for clarification? Surely not.

Nazri is not one to run away from a good fight or an opportunity to disparage members of the Opposition,

especially Kit Siang. In fact he is known to have emerged unscathed from the many verbal scrapes, in the Dewan Rakyat as well as outside.

Did he feel he was under pressure because he was pressed for time or was he peeved with deputy speaker Lim harassing him by asking him if he could finish in half an hour? All these were speculated upon by some MPs in the comfort of their Members Lounge.

Yet some others offered even more bizarre and outrageous explanations for Nazri's behaviour that day.

They all agree that it could not be due to his being deluged with requests for clarification because others too, especially Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak who began his rounding up speech when the Dewan sat again after lunch,

had to put up with countless requests for clarification. It was the normal thing.

Others agreed with Fong's assumption that Nazri had to cut short his delivery to give his colleagues from the PM's Department, Deputy Minister Datuk Abdul Rahman Suliman and parliamentary secretary Datuk Dr Mashitah Ibrahim, time to complete their rounding up by lunch time so that Najib could start his at 2.30.

Nazri is not one to run away from a good fight or an opportunity to disparage members of the Opposition, especially Kit Siang.

In fact Fong said so to Najib even before he could start his speech. After the deputy prime minister refused to give in to her repeated requests for *penjelasan*, she shouted in her shrill voice and in English: “Is the whole parliament to suit the time of the deputy prime minister?”

She sat down only after the uproar died down and only after she managed to shout above the din that “hopefully

what happened today would not be repeated”.

Najib took about half an hour and was followed by Transport Minister Datuk Seri Chan Kong Choy. Most ministers turned up to respond to the points raised about their ministries during the debate.

The 51 ministries managed to complete their responses by around midnight on Thursday – the last day of the meeting. The Supply Bill 2007 or Budget 2007 will be scrutinised further at committee stage when the Dewan Rakyat, adjourning for Ramadan, reconvenes in November.

Among the thoughts that MPs returning to their constituencies will take with them will be Nazri's use of “your mentor” a euphemism for Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, whenever he was involved in an altercation with **Karpal Singh (DAP-Bukit Gelugor)**. Another was linking the term dictatorship with the former PM.

This came about on Tuesday, when Nazri, explaining why Abdullah was being talked about as losing control, said it was because people could speak freely now.

“During the past administration, it was a bit of a dictatorship, people were not free,” he said.