



# FUMING SHAHRIR DROPS BOMBSHELL

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Shahrir

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Datuk Shahrir Samad yesterday dropped a bombshell by quitting as Barisan Nasional Backbenchers Club chairman.

He was apparently unhappy that fellow MPs did not follow his cue and support a motion to refer the *New Straits Times* to the House's Rights and Privileges Committee.

The motion was moved by Opposition leader Lim Kit Siang, following a report in the NST yesterday on an MP who allegedly asked the Customs and Excise Department to “close one eye” in a case involving the import of sawn

timber.

Shahrir spoke in support of the motion but many backbenchers were not in favour of it, even after listening to Shahrir's views.

The motion was rejected by the House after a 20-minute debate.

A few seconds later, a disappointed Shahrir gathered his papers and left the chamber, declaring in the lobby that he was quitting as BBC chairman.

No one expected this turn of events, when, before the start of question time, Lim rose to table his motion.

He said the report had cast aspersions on the House and its members.

“I don't know who the MP is and I do not intend that action

be taken against the NST.

“However, I propose that the matter be referred to the Rights and Privileges Committee,” he said, adding this would enable everyone to know the truth.

Chong Eng (DAP-Bukit Mertajam) seconded the motion.

Speaker Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib said: “The report was written in such a way that it implied that an MP had instructed a government officer to close one eye on the case.

“Although it did not name the MP involved, it cast both the House and the MP in a bad light,” he said.

Datuk Raja Ahmad Zainudin Raja Omar (BN-Larut) said while he understood the need to defend the House's

integrity, the news report was just that—a report.

Datuk Mohamed Aziz (BN-Sri Gading) said an investigation should first be conducted on the matter.

Shahrir then stood up to say the motion was aimed at protecting the integrity of Parliament and its members.

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When Ramli called for a vocal vote, the majority was against the motion. Ramli declared the motion rejected.