

# BBC members back Shahrir

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BARISAN Nasional MPs have voiced their support for Datuk Shahrir Samad to remain as Backbenchers Club (BBC) chairman.

A group of BBC members reaffirmed their support for Shahrir as its chairman and endorsed his commitment to integrity and good conscience at a press conference.

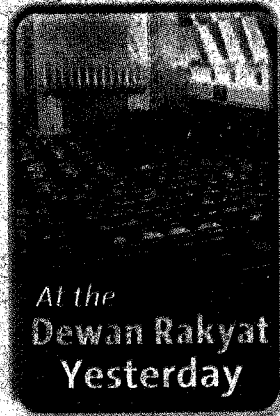
A special meeting of the club to elect its new chairman, earlier set for 8.45am today, was postponed last night after Chief Whip Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak requested that the BBC delay the election, saying that it was "too soon" to have it.

BBC secretary and Dungun MP Datuk Rosli Mat Hassan released a statement saying the club recognised that the chairman's position was "a re-electable one."

"We also reserve the right to exercise this right to elect the appropriate candidate," he said at the Parliament lobby.

Kota Baru MP Datuk Zaid Ibrahim said they had rejected Shahrir's resignation as chairman as he was elected by BBC members and not appointed to the position.

"He is answerable only to us," he added.



At the  
Dewan Rakyat  
Yesterday

Reports by ZULKIFLI  
ABDUL RAHMAN,  
FLORENCE A. SAMY  
and ELIZABETH LOOI

Rosli said the BBC's committee members, which included Shahrir, had met to discuss a number of issues.

These included the position of Jasin MP Datuk Mohd Said Yusof, who reportedly asked Malacca Customs to "close one eye" over the seizure of imported timber on April 14.

Shahrir quit as BBC chairman soon after an Opposition motion on Thursday, which he supported, was rejected in a



STATING HIS POINT: Shahrir speaking to reporters with Mohd Said (left) beside him at Parliament House yesterday.

voice vote by most of the Barisan MPs.

The motion, tabled by Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang, refers to a news report.

Najib subsequently met Shahrir and accepted his resignation, saying he had broken

ranks by supporting an Opposition motion.

Meanwhile, Shahrir said: "We have to re-establish clarity over what the parliamentary practise and the matters of privilege should be, as the newspaper report is not an authoritative

source in raising a motion."

The Barisan MPs also appealed to the Government to allow them to vote according to their conscience on matters that do not affect the Government's legislative position in the House.

At present, there is an unwritten rule, which compels Barisan MPs to oppose Opposition motions regardless of merit.

However, they said this "runs counter to the basic parliamentary practice and infringes on the duties of MPs."

The backbenchers also stated their "clear and unequivocal position" in response to the motion.

Referring to Rule 80 (1) of the Standing Orders, they said there was no breach of parliamentary privilege and the committee's scope was to ensure that parliamentary privileges were not breached or violated.

"However, this privilege is confined only to proceedings in the Dewan Rakyat and Dewan Negara," Rosli said.

He said while no MP was above the law, the issue should have been brought to the police or the Anti-Corruption Agency.

"Lim had only a newspaper report which is not substantive. The purported act by the Jasin MP directing Customs to 'close one eye' in a case involving the import of sawn timber occurred outside the House, thus it is not within the remit of the committee," he added.