

# PM's clear message to Barisan MPs

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## Know your limits, reps told



**Royal presence:** Abdullah greeting Tuanku Mizan and Seri Paduka Baginda Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Nur Zahirah on their arrival at Parliament House on Monday. — Bernama

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AT the Barisan Nasional MPs pre-council meeting on Monday, the MPs were advised by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to not criticise the Government "too harshly" — not to the extent of embarrassing it and giving it a bad image.

The MPs were told that calling for ministers' resignation was an unreasonable and improper demand by backbenchers.

Last year, Datuk Bung Mokhtar Radin (BN — Kinabatangan) and Datuk Mohamad Aziz (BN — Sri Gading), who inadvertently followed up a motion by the Opposition, were given a stern warning by the Barisan Chief Whip Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

But for the backbenchers, being vocal in the Dewan Rakyat does not mean they are behaving like Opposition MPs. Many vocal MPs believe they are merely expressing support for the Government by raising relevant issues.

They, however, agree that Barisan MPs should know their limits and not ask for ministers to resign.

"In principle, we are the Government's strong supporters and we will always support the Government. But we cannot be sleeping MPs who allow the Opposition to be the only ones raising issues. If this is so, the Government will be unpopular with the people," said Mohamad Aziz.

He said it was never the intention of Barisan MPs to spoil the good name of the country, Government and its leaders.

"Usually we give our views on the seriously-needed delivery system in the public service. It is our good intention that counts.

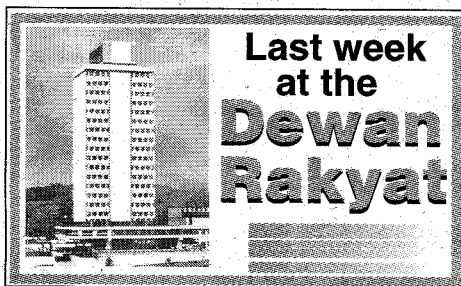
"The way we express our views may be a bit emotional but it is never overzealous."

Wong Nai Chee (BN — Kota Melaka) agrees, saying that Abdullah did not ask for the backbenchers to stop being critical but to make justified criticisms, using proper language and giving solutions.

"We must not criticise for the sake of criticising but give constructive views. To ask for a minister to resign is not only criticising but distrusting the administration," he said.

Wong said he did not think Abdullah's advice was to restrain the MPs but felt that it meant they could continue to be vocal.

"Within Barisan, there must be a mechanism for us to rectify ourselves. We should not spend much time dwelling on what we have achieved but rather talk about what we



have not done, including making legitimate criticisms.

"If we project our facts properly, I am sure we will get the Prime Minister's understanding," he said.

Barisan Backbenchers Club acting chairman Datuk Raja Ahmad Zainuddin Omar said backbenchers could not be "yes men."

"We may not be criticising the Government but giving our views, although the style of some MPs in presenting their views may seem as if they are criticising.

"We are given a free hand but that doesn't mean there is no limit," he said, adding that he had advised his colleagues to stop using harsh words that would not reflect well on the Government.

There were times, he said, when some MPs intended to bring up controversial issues but he persuaded them to instead discuss the issues elsewhere and not in Parliament.

"Perhaps it was on the spur of the moment or when certain MPs were provoked that they called for a minister to resign.

"Still our MPs control and behave themselves. We don't throw chairs like in some countries," he added.

Datuk Mohd Said Yusof (BN — Jasin) said the MPs understood Abdullah's message.

"Sometimes, my words are a bit harsh and daring. But we understand the message that we shouldn't tell ministers to resign."

Mohd Said is proud of being the first backbencher to highlight the flaws of the Customs Department, claiming that before this, no MPs dared to "shake" the department.

The Dewan sat for the first time this year after Seri Paduka Baginda Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Wathiqu Billah Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin Ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Mahmud Al-Muktafi Billah Shah opened the new Parliament session on Monday.

Tuanku Mizan opened the new session for the first time as King.

The Dewan sits tomorrow.