

Our country, or is it ours?

NST- 21/11/2006

THE heat at the just-concluded Umno general assembly spilled over into the Dewan Rakyat yesterday as the opposition and backbenchers clashed over the question of who owned the country.

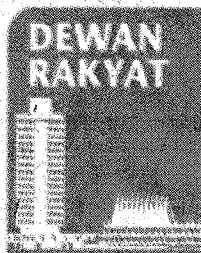
Datuk Badruddin Amiruddin (BN-Jerai) riled up the opposition when he used the term "negara kami" (our country) while rebutting opposition leader Lim Kit Siang.

Chong Eng (DAP-Bukit Mertajam) offered a solution. She proposed "negara kita", reasoning it was more inclusive and comprehensive.

"The term used by *Yang Berhormat* gives the impression that this country belongs to only one group."

The opposition harassed Badruddin to make a correction when he refused to budge from his stance, prompting the MP to complain to the Chair.

"They are disturbing me and not letting me finish my



■ Reports by V. Vasudevan, Eileen Ng and June Ramli

debate," said Badruddin, who was debating allocations for the Entrepreneur Development Ministry under Budget 2007 at the committee stage.

Speaker Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib diffused the situation by giving his take on both terms.

He said the phrase uttered by Badruddin was something people used all the time.

"But I will have to concede that it would have sounded better if he had used *negara*

kami semua as compared with *negara kami*. YB Jerai did not mean to segregate any of the races," he said, which seemed to pacify the floor.

The exchange between Badruddin and the opposition started when the Jerai member called on Mara to provide

more scholarships to poor Bumiputras to take up flying lessons.

Lim interjected and asked Badruddin to check his facts first as he could be mistaken, and told the House that the Umno deputy permanent chairman had committed a

mistake on the ownership of the *International Herald Tribune* while chairing the Umno general assembly.

This did not go down well with Badruddin who shouted back at Lim.

"*Jangan kurang ajar* (Don't be ill-mannered). That is my right, our right, our space. That is our assembly, you DAP stay out. *Ini negara kami* (this is our country)."

Chow Kon Yew (DAP-Tanjong) stood up and argued that the fact the assembly was telecast live showed it had become the country's affairs and not Umno's alone.

The House turned into a shouting gallery when Chong said she was fearful that Badruddin might run amok in the House.

It ended when Deputy Speaker Datuk Dr Yusof Yacob told Badruddin the time was up and he could continue after the lunch break.