

# Kit Siang taunts backbenchers

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## At the Dewan Rakyat

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**IT WAS** one of those weeks when as the Dewan Rakyat perfunctorily scrutinised the various ministries' proposed expenditure under Budget 2007 in a House barely with quorum, the only excitement on hand was Lim Kit Siang.

Questioning every fault of the government, whether real or perceived, the Opposition Leader and MP for Ipoh Timur poked and jibed and plainly insulted Barisan Nasional backbenchers for shying away from their job of vetting the bills.

On Tuesday afternoon, he put discomfited Works Ministry parliamentary secretary Datuk Yong Khoo Seng in a spot over the new Istana Negara, estimated to cost between RM400 million and RM500 million, that is going to be built on Jalan Duta.

He bamboozled the frontbencher with such questions: Why the need for it, why no open tender, who is behind the contractor Maju Jaya. When Yong said he would give him a written answer, Kit Siang told him to be transparent and demanded the answer there and then.

Deputy Speaker Datuk Dr Yusof Jacob saved the day for Yong by asking the House to quickly approve the ministry's estimates.

It was duly done amidst Kit Siang's protests that it could not be pushed through like that. "This is not Malaysia Boleh, this is Malaysia Bodoh," he shouted.

Enraged BN backbenchers stood up and waved their arms belligerently at him while shouting at the oppositionist to sit down. He did but not before giving his tormentors the famous Kit Siang grin.

It is a grin quite unlike any other. Often he will throw his head slightly back - his pomaded hair in place, his eyes reduced to mere slits, his lips

stretched back to expose excellent white teeth. Whether there is mirth and warmth in it and if it is friendly, leery or benign depends on who he beams it at.

The BN backbenchers see it as a mask he wears whenever he wants to insult, mock, taunt and belittle them without uttering a single unparliamentary word. They have no answer to it except to feel like a boxer with gloves on trying to scratch his groin.

All the quintessential oppositionist needs to do to keep the government backbenchers, the handful of frontbenchers and the government servants who crowd the space behind them from nodding away is just to be present.

Ever alert to every opportunity he can exploit to embarrass the government and insult its representatives, he saw his opportunity on Monday when **Datuk Badruddin Amiruddin (BN-Jerai)** talked about Mara helping poor bumiputras acquire proper pilot training.

Kit Siang asked whether Badruddin was sure of what he was saying because during the recent Umno general assembly he, as the party deputy permanent chairman, made the mistake of pointing out that the *International Herald Tribune* was British when it was American.

Badruddin refused to take the bait and said he was not going to fight with anybody as he was fast-

ing. His tormentor, however, persisted and after Badruddin was called the "laughing stock of the world", he lost his cool and forgot he was fasting.

Badruddin shouted the unparliamentary epithet "*kurang ajar*" (impudent) several times at Kit Siang and told him to stay away from Umno's affairs. "It's our affairs. *Keluarga kami, rumah tangga kami dan bangsa kami* (Our family, our house and our race)," he said.

Badruddin might as well have joined King Canute the Great in commanding the waves not to rush back to the shore.

On Tuesday, Kit Siang attacked Umno Youth leader Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein for brandishing the keris and Umno members for making "incendiary and seditious speeches" at the recent Umno general assembly, and wanted the House to debate them.

There was no way Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib would allow it but the artful oppositionist accepted the decision without demur. As far as he was concerned, the little speech he made had entered the Hansard and no one could say that he did not raise the matter in Parliament.

On Wednesday, **Datuk Mohd Alwi Che Ahmad (BN-Ketereh)**, during question time, defended the use of the keris at the Umno general assembly saying that in Malay culture it was a symbol of power and justice, and not of violence.

Opposition members and government backbenchers were quite peeved that most of the replies to their questions on the various ministries' estimates were answered by deputy ministers and parliamentary secretaries.