

Najib has until March, 15 to explain

> Dewan speaker seeking clarification from ex-PM over remarks on 1MDB debts that are said to have misled the House

KUALA LUMPUR: Former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak has been given an extension until March 15 to explain his remarks on 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) during last week's debate in the Dewan Rakyat, which was said to have misled the House.

Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tan Sri Azhar Azizan Harun said he received a letter from Najib requesting an extension for time to provide a written explanation on the matter.

"I have written to Yang Berhormat (Pekan MP and then finance

minister) to ask for clarification by today. Yesterday, after I chaired the sitting, I received a letter from Najib asking for a time extension until next Wednesday to explain.

"I allowed the application until next Tuesday morning, so there may be an issue of the Yang Berhormat Pekan disobeying my order."

Azhar clarified the matter when Tony Pua (PH-Damansara) raised Standing Orders 43 and 44(2) on the speaker's decision to seek clarification from Najib following Pua's motion that Najib be referred to

the Parliamentary Rights and Privileges Committee under Standing Order 36(12) over the remarks.

Pua had submitted the motion following Najib's speech in the Dewan Rakyat on March 2, which he said contained statements that allegedly misled the House on the 1MDB debt issue, and could be construed as insulting to the House of Representatives.

Standing Order 43 states that the Speaker or the Chairman in Committee shall be responsible for the observance of the rules of order in the House and Committee, respectively, and his decision on any point of order shall not be open to appeal and shall not be reviewed by the House, except upon a substantive motion moved for that purpose.

Standing Order 44(2) stipulates that the Chair shall order any member whose conduct is disorderly or whose acts are in contempt of the House or who continues to disregard the authority of the Chair to withdraw from the House for a period not exceeding 10 days, and such member shall immediately withdraw from the House.

If the meeting adjourns before the end of such period, the remainder of the period shall be brought to the next meeting, unless Parliament is earlier dissolved.

If the Chair does not determine the period for the member to withdraw, such period shall be deemed to be two days, inclusive of the day of the incident.

According to Azhar, the practice of seeking clarification in writing from members of Parliament was his

practice from the first day as speaker when considering a motion or debate whether to allow or reject a motion, and the practice is not found in the Standing Order.

"Before I allowed a motion, the motion usually involved matters on facts or debate on the facts. The motion that Yang Berhormat Damansara gave me involved four facts raised on whether the government used its money to pay off 1MDB's principal debt.

"That is the reason I am seeking clarification on the matter before I decide whether to allow or reject the motion," he said.

RSN Rayer (PH-Jelutong) also questioned Najib's action of giving an explanation to reporters outside the Dewan Rakyat, which Azhar viewed as beyond his control as the Dewan Rakyat speaker. - Bernama