

PMQ pilot test to start next week

Anwar to answer questions in Parliament on Tuesdays, says Speaker

KUALA LUMPUR: There will be a Prime Minister's Question and Answer (PMQ) session in the Dewan Rakyat at the First Meeting of the Second Session of the 15th Parliament, which starts on Feb 13.

Dewan Rakyat Speaker Datuk Johari Abdul said the PMQ session would be carried out as a pilot test every Tuesday.

"We suggest that the session be held every Tuesday for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to answer questions addressed to him and on Thursday, there will be the Minister's Question Time (MQT) session.

"This is one of the reforms that will be implemented, but it cannot be made a regular session yet. We will start it as a pilot test first so that we can identify any problems that may arise," he told Bernama.

He said the introduction of the PMQ session would also require amendments to the Standing Orders of the Dewan Rakyat before it could be made a regular session of the Dewan Rakyat.

In an effort to ensure that motions brought by MPs could be discussed, Johari said the Special Chamber session would also be improved by increasing the number of motions from two to four per session.

Johari said he also intended to give the opposition MPs and government backbenchers an opportunity to lead the session.

"This means that not only I and the two Deputy Speakers of the Dewan Rakyat can steer the session, but also other Members of Parliament," he added.



All smiles: Johari posing for a selfie with media personnel after a briefing in Parliament ahead of the Dewan Rakyat meeting which begins this coming Feb 13.

Johari said he had also proposed making it mandatory for all MPs to undergo medical check-ups every six months to ensure they were in good health and were able to carry out their duties effectively.

Regarding media coverage of the Dewan Rakyat sitting, he said the media members would be allowed to be in the Parliament lobby to get reactions from ministers or MPs.

Prior to this, they were not allowed to do so after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Dewan Rakyat sitting will take place for 29 days until March 30, with Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah opening the sitting on Feb 13, followed by the debate on the royal address, which will be held for five days.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who is also Finance Minister, is scheduled to table the 2023 Budget in the Dewan Rakyat on Feb 24.

Meanwhile, he said the re-enactment of the Parliamentary Services Act and upgrading of the Parliamentary Select Committee to empower Parliament were among the key agenda items for reform.

Johari, who was elected Speaker on Dec 19 last year, stated that he and Dewan Negara president Tan Sri Dr Rais Yatim had met with Anwar to discuss the proposed law.

"The Prime Minister himself is supportive of this. The draft (of the Bill) has been sent to the Attorney General's Chambers and will subsequently be sent to the Prime Minister's Department for fine-tuning in all aspects, including finance, legislation and so on," Johari told Bernama.

The Parliamentary Services Act was first enacted in 1963, just a few months before the formation of Malaysia.

It allowed Parliament to act as a truly independent body, running its own affairs, selecting its staff and controlling its expenditure.

However, the Act was repealed in 1992.

Johari, who has about 15 years' experience as an MP, also wants to strengthen the role of the Special Select Committee.

Apart from that, Johari said the Houses of Parliament (Privileges and Powers) Act 1952 was also expected to be improved.

In order to create a first-class Parliament, the maximum fine for members of the House who violate the rules has been increased from RM1,000 to RM10,000.

He said that under the law, a fine can be imposed on MPs who make racist, insulting or gender-discriminatory statements, and they can also be suspended from Parliament.