

**As polls loom, Parliament's last session 'suspends' time to approve laws**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
**April 20, 2012**  
**By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, April 20 — For the first time in 22 years, Parliament approved a “stop the clock” motion to complete all legislative debates till early this morning before adjourning what is believed to be the final sitting before the 13th general election.

The House debated and approved eight Bills on its last day when the meeting finally ended at 3.21am.

Earlier, at the stroke of midnight, the House stopped in mid-debate for Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Aziz to “suspend” time in accordance with parliamentary rules.

“Yang di Pertua, in accordance with Standing Order 90(2), I submit a motion to suspend the enforcement of Standing Order 12 in order to allow the meeting to complete all matters that should be completed by today,” said the minister in the Prime Minister’s Department.

Standing Order 12 stipulates that each sitting of the House can be extended past 5.30pm until midnight to complete the order for the day. The motion, supported by Nazri’s deputy Datuk V.K. Liew, was approved unanimously by the Lower House.

The motion effectively allowed the Dewan Rakyat to be extended indefinitely in order to complete debates and pass all the eight Bills listed on yesterday’s agenda.

Speaking to reporters later, Nazri said this was the first time since 1990 that such a motion was moved and approved in Parliament.

“I have been a legislator since 1990 so my memory only dates back to 1990. But as far as I know, this has never happened. In my experience, this is the first time in 22 years,” he said.

Nazri, who was flanked by several parliamentarians at the MPs’ lounge outside the chambers, noted that this was a poignant moment in Malaysian history, jokingly pointing out that Malaysia was expecting to go to the polls very soon.

The digital clock in the Dewan Rakyat chambers was stopped after a motion was moved to extend proceedings of the House indefinitely. — Picture courtesy of an MP  
According to lawmakers, there were still 37 Barisan Nasional (BN) MPs, 17 Pakatan Rakyat (PR) MPs and one independent lawmaker in the House after the “stop the clock” motion, all ready to debate the one remaining Bill and five ministry motions that were still on the day’s agenda.

Several MPs were also seen loitering around the Parliament lobby, some locked in discussion over the day’s events and some engaged in banter with the remaining reporters observing the proceedings.

A few lawmakers also stopped to pose for pictures in front of a large flat-screen TV right outside the House chambers that was screening the ongoing proceedings. The TV also projected an analogue clock that showed the time.

Earlier in the day, PR lawmakers had slammed the ruling BN government for "bulldozing" the eight Bills through the Lower House, claiming it was part of the government's strategy to position itself well before calling for polls.

The sitting could be described as historic at best, with the House having debated and approved crucial amendments to laws long described as draconian by those in the opposition camp.

Among others, the sitting had agreed to repeal the controversial Internal Security Act 1960 and approved the Security Offences (Special Measures) Bill in its place despite objections from the opposition bench.

The sitting also approved amendments to the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971, which effectively lifted the ban on student participation in politics.

Late last night, the Dewan Rakyat debated and approved amendments to the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984, agreeing to remove the home minister's absolute discretion over publishing licences and the need for annual renewals.

The Malaysian Insider had reported last month that Datuk Seri Najib Razak is looking to lead his coalition into federal polls for the first time in the first half of the year if he can put to bed controversies surrounding the National Feedlot Centre (NFC) and Malaysia Airlines (MAS).

Observers, including former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, believe this could be Najib's best chance to score a significant win amid the feel-good factor emerging from his transformative and reformist policies.

In a boost to his confidence, a recent poll also showed that Najib's approval rating had surged by 10 percentage points to 69 per cent on the back of an improving economy and the cash handout of RM500 to low-income earners under the Bantuan Rakyat 1 Malaysia (BR1M) scheme.

Pollsters Merdeka Center found that the prime minister's support was highest among households earning less than RM1,500 a month at 78 per cent, with four-fifths of Indians and 74 per cent of Malays also giving Najib the thumbs up.

The Malaysian Insider

Copyright © 2012 The Malaysian Insider

Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/as-polls-loom-parliaments-latest-session-suspends-time-to-approve-laws/>