

Pakatan slams BN for rushing eight laws in one day
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, April 19 — Federal opposition lawmakers are fuming with the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) government over its plan to “bulldoze” through a whopping eight Bills in Parliament by tonight.

The angry parliamentarians pointed out to The Malaysian Insider via mobile text messages from the House this morning that these Bills include crucial amendments to laws involving the elections process, student participation in politics and media freedom.

“I lost count! We are appalled. This bulldozing is atrocious to say the least, it proves that our Parliament is nothing more than a mere rubber stamp,” PKR vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar wrote in her message to The Malaysian Insider.

“It is obvious that some of these Bills are rushed thru for the sake of GE (general election), either to control elections practices, or to claim credit prior to GE,” Selangor DAP chairman Teresa Kok (picture) wrote in her SMS.

The Seputeh MP had earlier stood up in the House to object after deputy minister in the Prime Minister’s Department Datuk V.K. Liew moved the motion seeking to adjourn the current sitting only after the eight Bills are debated and passed through the Lower House.

“How can we debate so many Bills? This is a serious matter,” she said, her voice raised.

After some taunts from BN backbenchers, the motion was adopted.

The crucial Bills that must be debated and passed in Parliament today include the Election Offences (Amendment) Bill 2012, Universities and University Colleges (Amendment) Bill 2012, Private Higher Educational Institutions (Amendment) Bill 2012, Educational Institutions (Discipline) (Amendment) Bill 2012 and Printing Presses and Publications (Amendment) Bill 2012.

Others include the Jasa Perkasa Persekutuan (Remembrance Allowance) Bill 2012, Pingat Tentera Udara (Remembrance Allowance) Bill 2012 and the Capital Markets and Services (Amendment) Bill 2012.

Speaking to reporters at a press conference later, Kok said that this was a deliberate attempt by the government to bulldoze the Bills in time for the coming polls.

She said this had come as a shock to all Pakatan Rakyat (PR) MPs who were not expecting to be forced to go through so many legislative amendments by today.

“Even worse, today is the last day. And it is Thursday, so many have to leave by noon to go back to their constituencies,” she said, adding that there are only about 100 MPs present in the House today.

The Dewan Rakyat has 222 elected representatives.

Kok also pointed out that it had taken the House over one and a half day to pass the Security Offences (Special Measures) Bill, the new law to replace the Internal Security Act (ISA).

"They are trying to fit BN's agenda in the Bills.

"For the PPPA and the UUCA, for example, they want to pass it to take credit for them during the polls," she said.

Nurul Izzah complained that the amendments to the Election Offences Act had not been stated in the earlier report by the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC), taking PR MPs by surprise.

"Its implications are far reaching — effectively ending political parties' rights to enumerate voters on electoral roll — or verify it is the same electoral roll approved by quarter four of 2011. This amendment is a further erosion of voter rights," she said.

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