

**State opposition criticises move to "shut their mouths" in Penang state assembly**  
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**By Rita Jong**

The decision to skip the question-and-answer session at the Penang state assembly was seen as a step to "shut their mouths", claims the state opposition.

Barisan Nasional (BN) opposition leader Datuk Jahara Hamid even went as far as saying "democracy was dead", a declaration which caused a huge uproar among assemblymen from the opposite side.

The whole drama began in the morning when Speaker Law Choo Kiang informed parties that there would be no question-and-answer session before the elected representative began debating the Yang di-Pertuan Negeri Tun Abdul Rahman Abbas' speech, due to time constraints.

This decision irked Jahara (Teluk Air Tawar-BN), who objected to the move saying that the session was important for assemblymen to voice out the issues faced by the people from their area.

She said the session was to allow the assemblymen to carry out responsibilities entrusted to them by the people.

"This is an absolute arrogance of the state's power and by doing away with the session is like passing a death sentence on democracy in the House," she said.

Her remarks, however, did not sit well with Jagdeep Singh Deo (Datuk Keramat-DAP) who jolted up from his seat and demanded that she retract her statement.

"Democracy is not dead and we can still pose questions to the executive committee members during the debate," he said.

Later, Jahara said the skipping of the Q&A was like "shutting their mouths" and her fellow BN assemblymen echoed her sentiment.

Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said the cancellation of the Q&A was recommended by the state legal adviser to the state legislative assembly secretary.

However, he admitted to being taken by surprise over the decision and added that the session should have been allowed. – July 5, 2013.

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