

It was never my intention to get suspended again, says PKR lawmaker
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BY ELIZABETH ZACHARIAH

PKR lawmaker N. Surendran, who is serving his second six-month suspension from Parliament for a repeat offence, said it was never his intention to get suspended again.

"We must make it clear... I never tried to get suspended. I was suspended against my will. The idea that I somehow got myself suspended is like blaming a rape victim for being raped," he told The Malaysian Insider when it was suggested that some had questioned his intentions in getting suspended for a similar reason.

The human rights lawyer also claimed that the suspension was part of a plan by Putrajaya to "silence" him and stymie his efforts to push for a better Parliament.

He said his constituents in Padang Serai, Kedah, realised this and that was why they were behind him.

He said the 70,000 voters in his constituency have backed his fight and sympathetic when he was suspended for the first time last year.

"Going by the last time I was suspended, my constituents are actually supportive of what I am doing, which is pushing for parliamentary reforms," he told The Malaysian Insider.

"I am certain they are fully behind me. They know I am fighting for a good cause."

The first-term MP received a six-month suspension order a week ago for insulting the house and Speaker Tan Sri Pandikar Amin Mulia.

"My constituents can see that the very reason I was suspended was because I was bringing up issues that are of national importance, that is of concern to all Malaysians, including voters in Padang Serai," he added.

He had just completed a six-month suspension on a similar charge of insulting the speaker in November last year.

The latest motion to suspend the PKR vice-president was passed in a voice vote, without a debate, prompting opposition MPs to stage a walkout in the Dewan Rakyat last week.

It is believed that this is the first time a parliamentarian has been suspended in two consecutive sessions.

In tabling the motion, minister Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim said Surendran had crossed the line when he described the Parliament as "authoritarian" and that a "giant rubber stamp" should be built.

"His statements are untrue, baseless and put down not only the speaker's credibility but also the parliamentary democracy system practised here," Shahidan said.

Surendran claimed that he was blindsided by the suspension as he did not think he would be penalised for such a "trivial" matter.

"All I did was criticise a decision of the speaker. With this ridiculous motion, are they now saying that the speaker of the Dewan Rakyat is above and beyond criticism and reproach?"

Calling it a "dangerous precedent", the lawyer said this was allowed under the law and the Constitution, adding that this has never happened in other democracies.

Surendran had previously said that some of the reforms he and other Pakatan Rakyat politicians were seeking were time for the opposition to bring their motions, a proper parliamentary select committee system, the time period for asking questions to be reduced, time for private members' bills to be brought, and an impartial and neutral speaker.

"Certainly by suspending me, they have highlighted the fact that Parliament does need to be reformed. This does not happen in advanced democracies.

"So now, the public are talking about parliamentary reform because of the two suspensions. They know about it and want it, too." – June 29, 2014.

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