

15 DEC 1998  
Senate-Debate  
APPOINTMENT OF NEW DPM URGENT, SAY SENATORS

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 15 (Bernama) -- Two members of the Dewan Negara, debating the 1999 Budget today, said it would do much good for the country to have a new deputy prime minister appointed without delay.

Senator Datuk Zainudin Maidin said the appointment of a new DPM was urgent to reinforce the confidence of Malaysians as well as that of the international community.

" Moreover the move can at least downplay any possible scramble for the (DPM) post later," he said.

Senator Abu Bakar Ismail, while acknowledging that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir has prerogative over the appointment of his deputy, said filling up the vacant post fast would be a boon to efforts towards national economic recovery.

Last Sunday Dr Mahathir told reporters after the Umno special general assembly here that he had not made a decision on the appointment of a new deputy prime minister.

The deputy prime minister's post fell vacant following the expulsion of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim from the Cabinet last Sept 2 and from Umno the next day.

Anwar, 51, has claimed trial to five counts of unnatural sex acts and five counts of corruption and is currently being tried for four of the corruption charges.

Also debating next year's budget (Supply Bill 1999), Senator Datuk Joseph Balan Seling commended the national leadership for the gradually emerging positive effects of measures taken to deal with the economic crisis.

The measures include pegging the ringgit at RM3.80 to US\$1.

"Foreign investment is flowing back into the country along with investor confidence and we should be proud of the wisdom of our leaders in tackling the crisis," he said.

Senator Toh Puan Wan Seri @ Wan Asiah Ahmad spoke about polygamy and called for more stringent conditions on men intending to have many wives.

She proposed an additional condition determining the quantum of support allowances for the first wife and her children based on the husband's income before he could take subsequent wives.

She also proposed a waiver of the current condition allowing only married women to buy a low-cost home.

"This condition disqualifies unmarried women who are bread-winners from owning such homes whereas they are also obligated to provide shelter to family members," she added.

-- BERNAMA

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