

24/10/1998

`Budget can be presented by any minister'

THE Opposition yesterday questioned the legitimacy of the 1999 Budget as the process of tabling it at the Dewan Rakyat may be in violation of the Constitution.

DAP deputy president Karpal Singh said that the Permatang Pauh MP, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, should be the legitimate minister to be tabling the Budget if the Yang di-Pertuan Agong never revoked his ministership.

"The fact is that the Permatang Pauh MP did not resign from the post of Finance Minister. Did the King revoke his post under the advice of the Prime Minister?" he asked for clarification at the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

Raising a point of order, Karpal wanted Dr Mahathir to tell the House whether the King had officially revoked Anwar's position as Finance Minister.

His queries raised dissatisfaction among Barisan Nasional MPs as Dr Mahathir was at that time in the process of tabling the Supply Bill 1999 for second reading.

Some of the MPs started to call Karpal names, telling him to sit down and stop wasting the House's meeting time.

In reply, the Jelutong MP said the MPs from the ruling party have the mindset of wild animals.

Karpal was asked to withdraw his remark by the Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tun Mohamed Zahir Ismail. The DAP vice chairman responded and said: "I withdraw the wild animals remark and replace it with not so clever."

To Karpal's query, Dr Mahathir said the King had been informed and accepted the sacking of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim from his positions as the Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister.

Later outside the Dewan, Dr Mahathir told a press conference that Anwar's removal as minister was gazetted on September 5 1998 by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and signed by the Chief Secretary to the Government.

Dr Mahathir said Karpal is unaware that the Budget can be presented by any minister, not necessarily the Minister of Finance.

"So the suggestion that I had no right (to deliver the Budget) is baseless. Clearly I have been declared as (First) Finance Minister," he said.

The Government also proposed that a sum not exceeding RM18.05 billion be expended out of the Development Fund for the year 1999.

(END)