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Parliament-Review  
DANAHARTA BILL MUCH AWAITED

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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 5 (Bernama) -- Several major Bills including the Pengurusan Danaharta Nasional Bhd Bill 1998 were approved by the Second Meeting of the Fourth Session of the Ninth Dewan Rakyat which ended yesterday.

Members of Parliament focussed their attention on the Bill which was among measures taken by the government in its determination to revive the national economy.

The members generally were of the view that the Bill tabled by Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in the first week of the meeting was timely.

Tabling the Bill, Anwar had said the setting up of Pengurusan Danaharta Nasional Bhd or Danaharta would help financial institutions overcome the problem of managing non-performing loans and concentrate on their banking activities.

Danaharta initially would be fully owned by the government with a paid-up capital of RM250 million. It is estimated to require RM25 billion to buy over the non-performing loans from the banking system.

The Bill which was debated over three days by several members of the House reflected the people's wish to see the economy recover as soon as possible.

Members suggested that local banks reform their management system to come up with more efficient loan processing and payment recovery system.

Haji Husni Hanadzlah (BN-Tambun) had said such reforms were necessary as one of the reasons for the rise in non-performing loans was banks' negligence in processing loan application forms.

Supporting this view, Datuk Haji Sukri Mohamed (BN-Machang) suggested that Bank Negara come up with regulations setting a limit on loans which an individual could obtain.

"We no longer want to see an individual getting loans of between RM100 million and RM200 million while the collateral was below actual market price," he said.

Winding up debate on the Bill, Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Dr Affifuddin Omar said Danaharta was only taking over the duties of banks on a contract basis and would not resort to taking over the assets of borrowers by force.

The Communications and Multimedia Bill 1998 and Communications and Multimedia Commission Bill also received appropriate attention from Members in line with the setting up of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC).

The Communications and Multimedia Bill is the sole legislation in support of government efforts to ensure the successful development of the MSC project.

With the passing of the Bill, the Telecommunications Act 1950 and the Broadcasting Act 1988 had been abolished. The Bill only covers the electronic multimedia and communication network and does not involve the print media.

The other Bills that were approved by the Dewan Rakyat were the Chemists (Amendment) Bill, Supplementary Supply (1998) Bill, National Land Code (Amendment) Bill, Bankruptcy (Amendment) Bill, Labuan Offshore Financial Services Authority (Amendment) Bill, Tourism Industry (Amendment) Bill and Development Funds (Amendment) Bill.

The meeting also saw a change in the seating arrangement in the Dewan

with the reappointment of the Member of Parliament for Merbok Tun Daim Zainuddin to the Cabinet.

Daim, who is now the Minister of Special Functions in the Prime Minister's Department, is seated in front and shares the same row with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Transport Minister and MCA President Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and Works Minister and MIC President Datuk Seri S.Samy Vellu.

Senator Tan Sri Kasitah Gaddam, also reappointed to the Cabinet as Minister of Land and Cooperative Development is in the back row of Division A.

During the meeting, a motion was also tabled to amend the House Standing Orders so that proceedings can begin at 10am. At present the Dewan sits from 2.30pm from Monday to Thursday.

In a rare situation, both government and opposition members of the Dewan Rakyat united and with one heart supported a DAP motion to discuss the strained relations between Malaysia and Singapore following the republic's move to shift the customs and immigration checkpoint from the Tanjong Pagar Railway Station.

They unanimously urged the government to be firm in this issue with Singapore.

-- BERNAMA

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