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Parliament-Budget
DEWAN RAKYAT PASSES 1999 SUPPLY BILL

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 8 (Bernama) -- The Dewan Rakyat today approved the Supply Bill 1999 without amendments after debating it at policy and committee stages for 26 days.

The bill seeks to allocate RM65.095 billion for the federal budget for next year of which RM47.042 billion or 72.3 per cent will be for operating expenditure and RM18.053 billion or 27.7 per cent, development expenditure.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is also First Finance Minister, tabled the bill last Oct 23.

Today's sitting of the House saw Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Works Minister Datuk Seri S Samy Vellu winding up debate at committee stage on budget estimates for their respective ministries.

Samy Vellu, in winding up debate, expressed disappointment that some state governments still chose to ignore a federal government proposal for total privatisation of their water supply instead of water treatment plants only.

"During the prime minister's meeting with menteri besar he had proposed that privatisation of state water supply also cover supply pipelines to consumers and not merely the plants," he said.

To points raised during debate by Dr Ramli Taib (BN-Kemaman), the minister acknowledged that companies taking over water treatment plants from several state governments had suffered losses.

Samy Vellu told the House that the Economic Planning Unit was reviewing privatisation of highways because contractors with the successful bids were quoting exorbitant costs.

"For the first privatised highway project we paid between RM1 million and RM3 million per kilometre but the cost has soared to between RM20 million and RM30 million for the same distance because the government requires contractors to erect tiered and elevated intersections," he said.

As such the government would now encourage tiered intersections be built only at specific locations because each such structure cost about RM45 million to build, he said.

Samy Vellu also told the House that he had raised at Cabinet meetings the possibility of further hikes in highway toll for next year.

"I've stated that if we do not want to raise toll, the government would have to compensate the concession companies," he added.

The House sits again tomorrow.

-- BERNAMA

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