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LEAD Mahathir-Post

MY APPOINTMENT AS FINANCE MINISTER HAS BEEN GAZETTED - MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 23 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said his appointment as First Finance Minister has been confirmed by a gazette issued on the command of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

He said the gazette, dated Sept 5, was issued under the Ministerial Functions Act 1969 and the Ministers of Federal Government Orders 1998.

It was signed by the Chief Secretary to the Government, he told reporters after presenting the 1999 Budget at the Dewan Rakyat today.

Before the presentation, Opposition MP Karpal Singh had claimed that Dr Mahathir's appointment as First Finance Minister was invalid and he was therefore not eligible to table the Budget.

Dr Mahathir said Karpal's claim was baseless as the appointment had been confirmed.

The Prime Minister also clarified that the Budget speech could be presented by any ministers and not just the finance minister.

Earlier, when responding to Karpal in the Dewan Rakyat, Dr Mahathir said he had conveyed his decision to sack Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

The King did not voice any objection when informed of the decision, he said.

"The Yang di-Pertuan Agong accepted it and thereafter a (new) list of Cabinet ministers was announced," said Dr Mahathir when clarifying his position as First Finance Minister.

Karpal had also asked if the Yang di-Pertuan Agong had revoked Anwar's appointment and if the revocation had been gazetted.

He cited Article 43 (5) of the Federal Constitution which says ministers other than the Prime Minister hold their posts for as long as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong consents, unless the King revokes their appointments on the advice of the Prime Minister or they resign from the posts.

Dr Mahathir said: "I have conveyed my decision. Whether it amounts to advice or not is up to the Yang Berhormat (Karpal). But in my opinion, it is an advice to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong."

Karpal's speech drew objections from government MPs who felt it was a waste of time and wanted the Budget presentation to begin.

Speaker Tun Mohamed Zahir Ismail, asking Karpal to stop his speech, said that in his opinion, the Budget presentation was not be affected by whether the revocation was gazetted or not.

Anwar was removed from the Cabinet and Umno early last month. He is currently held at the Sungai Buloh prison pending his Nov 2 trial on four of 10 charges of corrupt practices and sodomy.

-- BERNAMA

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