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Parliament-Constitution

DEWAN RAKYAT PASSES CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT BILL 2001

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 1 (Bernama) -- The Dewan Rakyat today passed 12 provisions of the Constitution (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2001 which among other things amended Clause (2) Article 8 of the Federal Constitution prohibiting sex discrimination.

One hundred and seventy-two members of the house voted unanimously for the bill including the opposition when it was put to vote during second reading.

The decision was announced by Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tun Dr Mohamed Zahir Ismail.

The Dewan Rakyat has 193 members including eight senators who cannot vote.

The amendments also provide that if a senator dies or ceases to hold the post before the expiry of his or her term, his or her successor can only hold the post for the remaining period until the expiry of the term of his or her predecessor.

The amendments also provide for the posts of Deputy President of the Dewan Negara and Deputy Speaker of the Dewan Rakyat to be made full time in view of the increasing workload.

Clause (1) Article 114 of the Federal Constitution provides for an increase in the number of Election Commission (EC) members from three to five ordinary members, besides the existing Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

Twenty members of parliament took part in the debate on the bill besides 20 other members who sought clarification.

When winding up the debate on the bill, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim said the 13 amendments to the Constitution were being made in line with the aspirations of the people.

"Try to think of all the provisions as giving positive effects to the administration of the country based on policies within the scope of the country's struggles all this while. So those who don't want to be grateful, I think they will continue to be ungrateful," he said.

On citizenship, he said it was highly complicated and there was no need to touch on them at the moment because the special provisions of the law concerning citizenship should be given greater scrutiny.

Rais said the status for widows and widowers was the same, that is, the pension would cease if they were to remarry although the government would study the proposal that the pensions be continued.

On the valid and invalid texts debated in Article 160A, he said the struggle for the national language had been going on since the 1960s to enhance the status of the Malay Language.

"But today, when the BN (Barisan Nasional) government led by Dr Mahathir try to take the dream one step further in the form of the Constitution there are people who do not agree," he said.

Mohamed Zahir later announced that the head of the council, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had decided that the Dewan Rakyat sitting be extended by another four days from Aug 6 to 9 for the tabling of several bills for first reading.

The house will sit again tomorrow.

-- BERNAMA

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