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Windfall for remarried widows

reports on "Dewan Rakyat" by Ramlah Said; Brenda Lim  
REMARRIED widows who lost the pension of their late husbands will have it reinstated beginning Jan 1 but no arrears will be paid.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim told the Dewan Rakyat yesterday that women who were widowed for the second time would also receive the pensions of both husbands.

The new ruling was announced by the Government during the tabling of the 2002 Budget by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Oct 19.

Winding up points raised by Member of Parliaments debating the Budget, Rais touched on the electoral roll issue which was raised mostly by Sabah MPs.

He said it was impossible to ensure the roll was 100 per cent accurate, especially in deleting deceased voters as deaths, particularly in rural areas, were often not reported.

On voter turnout, he said the rate would be improved with greater publicity and increased awareness of one's responsibility.

To a question by Datuk Fadzil Noor (Pas-Pendang), he said development plans for Putrajaya were going smoothly.

Phase 1A, involving government offices in Parcel A, B, C and D, has been completed and the respective ministries have already moved in.

Phase 1B would be completed by the end of 2002.

To date the project has cost RM4.2 billion, of which RM3.4 billion was allocated under the Seventh Malaysia Plan and RM4.6 billion under the Eighth Malaysia Plan.

He said the total expenditure to develop Putrajaya, excluding the building of private offices, amounted to RM12 billion.

Winding up, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Senator Datuk Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin said Malaysia had been recognised as an Islamic State a long time ago.

He added that after independence the status was strengthened with the inclusion of Islam as the country's official religion in the Constitution.

He said Dr Mahathir's announcement recently that Malaysia was an Islamic State was a reminder to those who had forgotten about it.

He added that while ulama worldwide recognised Malaysia as an Islamic State, Pas refused to accept the fact.

Abdul Hamid said Islamic teachings were practised in all areas - including economy, social and legal.

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