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Parliament-Commotion

DEWAN RAKYAT ADJOURNS FOR 15 MINUTES DUE TO COMMOTION

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 1 (Bernama) -- The Dewan Rakyat sitting today had to be adjourned for 15 minutes from 12.15pm following a commotion over the issue of prayers.

It started when Deputy Information Minister Datuk Zainuddin Maidin, who was winding up the Budget 2004 debate for the Information Ministry, refused to make way for several members of the opposition who wanted clarification over the issue of `qada' or replacing missed prayers.

The situation was aggravated when most of the opposition members, mainly from PAS, were not happy with Zainuddin's statement that there were certain groups who had tainted the country's image by highlighting Islam in a stiff and old-fashioned manner.

Several PAS members who felt that Zainuddin's allegation was directed at them, immediately stood up to seek permission to interject and refused to sit despite being asked to do so by Speaker, Tun Dr Mohamed Zahir Ismail.

As a result, Mohamed Zahir had to adjourn the sitting for 15 minutes to cool down the atmosphere in the house.

The house resumed sitting at 12.30pm with Zainuddin being asked to continue his winding up.

However, five minutes later, Datuk Dr Hassan Mohd Ali (PAS-Parit Buntar) interjected to ask Zainuddin to withdraw the words `jumud' (stiff) and `kolot' (old-fashioned) which he had uttered earlier.

Zainuddin defended his statement, saying that he was not directing it at anyone specifically.

Mahfuz Omar (PAS-Pokok Sena) then stood up and sought the Speaker's assistance in making a decision as it involved the decorum of the house.

After being asked by Mohamed Zahir, the deputy minister then agreed to withdraw the offending statements.

Following the tabling of the 2004 Budget on Sept 12 by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, which lasted three hours from 4pm, the opposition had turned it into an issue saying that there was no provision for a break for the `asar' prayers.

-- BERNAMA

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