

## **Deputy minister defends Najib's cabinet appointments**

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A deputy minister defended his new colleagues in the recent cabinet reshuffle, saying that the appointment of the senators to be his peers is not "undemocratic".

Deputy Higher Education Minister Saifuddin Abdullah said that people should understand that the "voice of the rakyat" is not represented in the administration, but the Dewan Rakyat, and that there is a clear difference between the two institutions.

"Why the prime minister did not appoint MPs was because those with specialisation were not represented in the Dewan Rakyat, and yet the PM wants to maintain a certain proportion of representation in the administration.

saifuddin abduallah "In the final analysis, the ministers and deputy ministers are answerable to the Dewan Rakyat anyway. So it is irrelevant if the cabinet are members of parliament or not," said Saifuddin (right), who is also an Umno supreme council member.

He also pointed out that the members of the US cabinet are neither senators nor congressmen.

"So are we saying that the US president ran contrary to principles of democracy?" he asked in a telephone call to Malaysiakini.

He also responded to criticism that the creation of two new deputy minister's posts was extravagant, in the face of subsidy cuts and a fragile economy.

"One or two additional deputy ministers are not going to pinch the national budget. Next thing they'll say is that the PM and DPM cannot use their government-provided transport," he said, hitting out at the Opposition, claiming that they are making an issue out of nothing.

DAP parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang had previously called Prime Minister Najib Razak's cabinet reshuffle as "another game of musical chairs with old, tired and discredited political faces".

Lim also said that the cabinet was "not only the most unrepresentative in the nation's history but also with the most number of unelected and unelectable senators".

Calls for more women in cabinet

Meanwhile, the reshuffle raised the ire of DAP's Iron Lady Teresa Kok, who pointed out that no new women had been appointed to the cabinet.

"Najib's cabinet reshuffle shows utter contempt for women's representation in government.

"For all the propaganda spouted by BN-owned media, it is plain as daylight that Najib Razak reshuffled his cabinet yesterday for the sole purpose of downplaying MCA and MIC's internal leadership problems, did nothing at all for the rakyat's interest, and nothing at all to increase women's representation in government," said the Seputeh MP.

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