

Wan Azizah returns to Parliament as opposition leader
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By Eileen Ng

Parliament will welcome back Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail after a seven-year absence when it reconvenes tomorrow.

The PKR president, who won the Permatang Pauh seat for the fourth time earlier this month after the disqualification of incumbent and her husband Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim because of his second sodomy conviction, will be appointed opposition leader for the second time.

She was previously the opposition leader after the watershed 2008 March general election until August the same year, when she stepped down to make way for Anwar's return to politics after being jailed for sodomy in 1998.

"She is a capable leader. The results of Permatang Pauh by-election showed that she is much respected and has proven she is accepted by the people. She has shown true grit, determination and sacrifice by standing by Anwar as he is being persecuted and oppressed.

"Her return to Parliament will be a new impetus for Pakatan Rakyat to push for a change of government in the next general election," said DAP's Ipoh Timur MP Thomas Su.

Dr Wan Azizah and new Rompin MP Rompin Datuk Hasan Arifin will take their oath of office before speaker Tan Sri Pandikar Amin Mulia, who on Saturday featured in the news for several hours after former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Pandikar Amin had quit during a forum.

Several hours later, the two-term speaker issued a statement that he was still in the chair and would preside at Monday's meeting.

The highlight of the 16-day sitting is the tabling of the 11th Malaysia Plan (11MP) by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak on Thursday.

This five-year development blueprint is important as it is the last lap before Malaysia reaches its target of becoming a high-income nation by 2020.

Charting the economic development of all sectors, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Abdul Wahid Omar said last month the 11MP was expected to address poverty eradication as well as access to education and healthcare.

Putrajaya is expected to set aside RM250 billion to execute the plan, said research house TA Securities Research in its second quarter of Traders' Compass published early last month, a 8.6% increase from the RM230 billion allocated for the current 10th Malaysia Plan.

It is expected to focus on high-impact projects and working with the private sector to boost economic activities and employment opportunities.

However, DAP Kluang MP Liew Chin Tong questioned the relevance of such plans, noting that they were relics of the past and contained no new approach of thinking.

"Five-year plans were first started by Stalin's USSR in 1930s. It was a common planning tool in the 1960s when central planning or its variants pretty much ruled the world.

"But five-year plans are not relevant any more in such a volatile global economy," he said in an opinion piece published by The Malaysian Insider.

The controversy over 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) is also expected to be raised again in the Dewan Rakyat, especially since reports surfaced of the sale of land in its Tun Razak Exchange (TRX) financial district to pilgrims' fund Lembaga Tabung Haji.

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) will start its probe into the debt-laden state investment vehicle but does not expect the investigation to be concluded quickly.

"I don't expect we can finish by the end of this sitting. There are many issues to look into, we intend to go all the way back to the beginning and we are calling a lot of people, so I doubt we can finish in two weeks," said PAC member William Leong.

Meanwhile, PAS has not abandoned its ambition to implement hudud in its east coast state of Kelantan and had resubmitted a notice to table a private member's bill.

The move is bound to strain ties between its allies, DAP and PKR, which have been consistently against the Islamic party's move.

It is not known who submitted the notice this time, but PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang, who is also Marang MP, had previously presented the notice to table the motion in the Dewan Rakyat on March 18.

The bill was entered as the last item (No. 24) for tabling at the meeting on April 7, but there was no time to debate it as the Dewan Rakyat was adjourned on April 9.

"I don't think the motion will see the light of day. By convention, government business takes priority and has to be finished first," said PKR's Bayan Baru MP Sim Tze Tzin, adding that this would never happen.

This sitting will also see the Dewan Rakyat debate on the amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) (CPC) Bill 2015 and Evidence (Amendment) Bill 2015.

The bills were to be debated at the last meeting and were deferred following objections from lawmakers from both sides of the divide, who had described the

amendments as cruel and oppressive.

They then requested the bills be scrutinised and refined after lawmakers expressed unhappiness over matters related to judicial discretion in the CPC. – May 17, 2015.

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