

Dewan Rakyat draws attention as budget meeting nears

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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 30 -- The third meeting of the third session of the 14th Parliament which is scheduled to begin on Monday and will have Budget 2021 tabled on Nov 6 is expected to see heated debate in the wake of the political developments in the country.

It will be the first national budget prepared by the Perikatan Nasional (PN) coalition government led by Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin after being in power for six months.

Also before Dewan Rakyat Speaker Datuk Azhar Azizan Harun are several motions of no-confidence against the prime minister initiated by some opposition MPs as well as motions from back-benchers expressing full confidence and pledging allegiance to Muhyiddin as the prime minister.

According to the Dewan Rakyat calendar, the Supply Bill 2021 or Budget 2021 is scheduled to be tabled by Finance Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz. It will be debated by MPs at the policy and committee levels for five weeks before it is put to a vote.

Budget 2021 is not only much awaited by a majority of the people as well as industries deeply affected by the COVID-19 pandemic but is also seen as a platform to gauge the majority support of the prime minister among the 222 MPs.

The question of support came to the fore after Opposition Leader and PKR president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim claimed on Sept 23 that he had strong and convincing support from MPs to form a new federal government.

The tussle for power among politicians ahead of the Dewan Rakyat budget meeting prompted Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah to issue a decree calling for a stop to all political disputes and

pledge their undivided support for Budget 2021 to ensure the people's well-being and enable the country's economic revival after being hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The King issued the decree after a meeting of the Malay Rulers which scrutinised and declined a request by Muhyiddin for the declaration of an emergency for the government to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

The upcoming budget meeting, which will take place over 27 days up to Dec 15, is also expected to see the second reading of the Independent Police Conduct Commission (IPCC) Bill 2020.

The bill seeks to provide for the establishment of an independent commission and enhance the integrity of the police force, reduce misconduct among police personnel and promote public confidence in the police force.

Two other bills are also scheduled for second reading, namely the Poisons (Amendment) Bill 2019 which, among others, will introduce a new provision requiring registered medical practitioners to issue prescriptions if requested by their patients; and the Cooperatives (Amendment) Bill 2020.

As was the case at the previous Dewan Rakyat meeting, this third meeting of the third session of the 14th Parliament will also apply the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) set by the National Security Council and the Ministry of Health to check the transmission of the COVID-19 virus.

All MPs and staff are required to undergo COVID-19 screening ahead of the meeting.

MPs from Sabah, which saw a recent drastic rise in the number of COVID-19 cases, were instructed to be in the federal capital 14 days prior to the meeting to undergo the mandatory quarantine.

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