

Parliament's first week sitting creates history as Anti-Sexual Harassment Bill passed

Bernamea

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KUALA LUMPUR: The first week of the Dewan Rakyat sitting made history when the Anti-Sexual Harassment Bill 2021 was passed on Wednesday (July 20).

It is hoped that the bill which was first mooted in 2011 would be able to address sexual harassment in Malaysia which does not have dedicated laws on it.

However, there was 'drama' during the debate session on the bill when the opposition claimed that Datuk Seri Tajuddin Abdul Rahman (BN-Pasir Salak) had uttered rude remarks that led to a heated exchange in the Dewan Rakyat.

Another uproar erupted during the sitting which began on Monday (July 18) when Isnaraissah Munirah Majilis (Warisan-Kota Belud) was ordered out of the Dewan Rakyat and suspended for two days after she ignored the Speaker's instruction and insisted to have the motion on the Sulu group's claims on Sabah to be debated.

The issue continued to be raised by opposition lawmakers before Speaker Tan Sri Azhar Azizan Harun explained on Wednesday that a debate on the Sulu Group's claims at the Dewan Rakyat may jeopardise Malaysia's interest in the litigation proceedings of the case.

According to him, the debate may also reveal the government's strategies in handling the case, hence giving an advantage to the other party involved.

On July 12, the Paris Court of Appeal allowed the Malaysian Government's application to stay the enforcement of the Final Award issued by the arbitration court on the ground that it would affect the immunity of Malaysia's sovereignty.

On the same day, it was reported that the assets of two Petronas subsidiaries in Azerbaijan have been seized by the Sulu Group.

The Dewan Rakyat also approved a motion to quash the House's previous decision on March 23 which rejected the extension of the enforcement of Subsection 4 (5) of the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 or SOSMA.

The motion tabled in accordance with the House of Representative's Standing Order 36 (3) was approved after a vote which saw 105 Members of Parliament agree while 83 disagreed and 32 were not present.

Following the decision, the Home Ministry will re-submit the motion to extend the enforcement of Subsection 4 (5) of the Act which allows the 28-day detention period to be maintained for another five years beginning July 31, during this Parliament session.

The Dewan Rakyat also passed seven bills, namely the National Forestry (Amendment) Bill 2022; Malaysian Border Control Agency (Dissolution) Bill 2021; Offenders Compulsory Attendance (Amendment) Bill 2021 and East Coast Economic Region Development Council (Amendment) Bill 2022.

Other passed bills were the Control of Padi and Rice (Amendment) Bill 2022; Poisons (Amendment) Bill 2022 and Employees' Social Security (Amendment) Bill 2022.

However, the motion on the election of a Deputy Speaker for the Dewan Rakyat to replace Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said was postponed to the next meeting of the House.