

NST 24-08-08 m/s 2

# Anti-inflation moves get the nod

## MPs who did not attend the vote



Datuk Shahrir Abdul Samad tabled the motion

THE Dewan Rakyat yesterday endorsed measures taken by the government to combat inflation, easily quashing what had been billed as a proxy vote of confidence in the national leadership.

Parliament approved of the restructuring of unsustainable fuel subsidies, including the June 5 petrol and diesel price hikes.

The government motion was carried with 129 voting in favour and 78, all from the opposition, voting against. In the six-hour debate on the motion tabled by Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Shahrir Abdul Samad, 18 members spoke, divided equally between the government and opposition.

Shahrir moved that the house:

"Is sensitive to the sudden hike in the price of fuel, food and other commodities in the world market, which is a global phenomenon beyond the control of the government;

"Realises that the phenomenon of inflation carries a major negative impact on the well-being of the people and the country's economic development;

"Understands and supports the government's measures to re-structure the oil and gas subsidy system which is a burden on the government's finances and cannot be borne in the face of increasing

global oil prices, so as to reduce the burden on the nation's economy and to allow subsidies to be distributed more equitably to those who are truly in need;

"Supports steps implemented by the government to reduce the burden on the people caused by the hike in the price of fuel, food and commodities, to ensure the people's well-being is preserved;

"Realises the government's aspirations and efforts to continue to increase economic growth and push ahead with the national development agenda, despite the increasingly competitive global environment;

"Calls on Malaysians at all levels, businessmen, manufacturers and political parties to be strong and united in facing global challenges and preserving our shared peace, stability and harmony."

At the end of debate, the opposition called for a division despite lacking in numbers. (A division is when members make known their votes individually instead of the usual voice vote, when the speaker decides which is louder, the "ayes" or "nays".)

Deputy Speaker Datuk Ronald

Kiandee, who was in the chair at the time, at first ruled there would be no division as the opposition had not called for one after Shahrir finished winding-up.

He ruled a voice vote would suffice. However, the decision was overturned by Speaker Tan Sri Pandikar Amin Mulia, who took over the chair, after hearing further arguments.

The Barisan Nasional has 140 members while the opposition has 81. There is one Independent MP.

Yesterday, 11 BN and four opposition members were absent. Independent Datuk Ibrahim Ali voted with the opposition.

The outcome of yesterday's vote would not have been in doubt but for the Sabah Progressive Party's declaration last week that it would press for a motion of no confidence in the prime minister.

Some opposition MPs had hinted that a division could be turned into a confidence vote with the help of dissident BN members, including the two from the SAPP.

Adding to the drama was the uncertainty of whether a division would be called, which the opposition refused to state until Shahrir finished replying to points raised in the debate. Immediately after the vote, BN backbenchers thumped the tables to indicate their joy while opposition deputies shouted sarcastic congratulations.

In his winding-up, Shahrir said the opposition ranks were too divided in their criticism of the motion. He said opposition views were steeped in divergent ideologies in suggesting ways the government should disburse subsidies.

"No matter what the government does the opposition will insist we are not doing the right thing."

### Ministers:

- Minister in the Prime Minister's Department-Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi (Bagan Datok)
- Federal Territories Minister Datuk Seri Zulhasnan Rafique (Setiawangsa)
- Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim (Jelubu)

### Barisan Nasional MPs:

- Datuk Dr Chua Soon Bui (Tawau);
- Datuk Eric Enchin Majimbun (Sepanggar);
- Raimi Unggi (Tenom);
- Datuk Seri Mohd Radzi Sheikh Ahmad (Kangar);
- Tan Sri Rafidah Aziz (Kuala Kangsar);
- Datuk Seri Azlan Sultan Abu Bakar (Jerantut);
- Datuk Dr James Dawos Mamit (Mambong);
- Datuk Thiong Thai King (Lanang).

### Pakatan Rakyat (PR)

- Gobind Singh Deo (DAP-Puchong);
- Chow Kon Yeow (DAP-Tanjong);
- Nurul Izzah Anwar (PKR-Lembah Pantai);
- One not identified at press time.