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Victims are a priority

TUESDAY
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Paisley hits out over commission

The Alliance Party, SDLP and Ulster Unionists are playing political football with the setting up of the Victims Commission, First Minister Ian

Paisley claimed today.

As MLAs debated the second stage of a Bill creating the four-member commission, the DUP leader hit out at the three parties for opposing its accelerated passage.

Mr Paisley (DUP, North Antrim) said: "On this all-important matter people said we must see something is done, then immediately there seems to be a desire to stop this House in moving forward on this issue.

"But it will not be stopped. This matter will go on legitimately in this House. The Deputy First Minister and myself in our offices and those supporting us in the Executive of this House will not be stopped.

"May I say to the victims today we are your friends and we are going to help you. We have a determination and we are going to do what we promised we would do.

"I can assure this House today that the needs of victims and survivors is one of the key priorities of this government - this is not a second rate thing, this is nothing to be kicked like a football to make cheap political points. This is about people`s lives, their futures. This is for the healing process that this beloved province of ours needs so badly and we are going to see that it is going to be kept."

It emerged yesterday that the Victims` Commission will cost £750,000 every year in wages and administration, with the four commissioners earning £65,000 apiece.

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