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Parliament-Debate

MAKE ARABIC COMPULSORY FOR MUSLIM STUDENTS

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 5 (Bernama) -- A Government backbender today proposed that Arabic be made compulsory for Muslim students to help overcome the social problems faced by Muslims in the country.

Hajah Ilani Ishak (BN-Kota Bharu) said this was because they could acquire a deeper understanding of Islam only through a sound knowledge of Arabic.

Taking part in the debate on the Supply Bill 1997 in the Dewan Rakyat, she said more than 70 per cent of those involved in social ills such as child abuse and AIDS involved Muslims when in fact they only made up 51 per cent of the country's population.

"This is very shameful and the nearly RM1 billion that had been allocated in the Supply Bill for propagation of Islam could be used to teach Arabic to Muslims students so that they will better understand and practise Islamic teachings," she said.

She said Muslims should have a good command of Arabic, English and Malay so that they would have an advantage over others.

Tan Kok Wai (DAP-Cheras) proposed that the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) be removed from the Prime Minister's Department and made directly responsible to Parliament.

This was to wipe out corruption which had caused concern to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who spoke at length on this subject during the recent Umno General Assembly, he said.

"By being a more independent body, the ACA can act more efficiently to check corruption," he said.

Jimmy Donald (BN-Sri Aman) proposed that the implementation of infrastructure projects in Sarawak's interior be privatised.

Chang See Tan (BN-Gelang Patah) proposed that rural commercial enterprises be further modernised to free the rural people from the clutches of poverty.

Sukinam Damo (BN-Batang Sadong) asked the government to be firm in implementing development projects and ensure that such projects were carried out efficiently and also that rural areas had a fair share of such projects.

It was not fair that only urban areas and its outskirts should experience development whereas the question of roads, water and electricity supply, schools and clinics in the rural areas had yet to be resolved, he said.

Dr Maximus Johnity Ongkili (PBS-Bandau) welcomed the move to introduce the ISO 9000 standard at all levels of the public sector but said the government should first ensure that the performance of basic service was improved and upgraded.

He also urged the government to ensure that social and economic development projects were based on the principle of justice and that rural people too benefited from such projects.

Dr G. Leelavathi (BN-Kapar) urged the government to give appropriate attention to Malaysian Indians so that they too could achieve progress along with the other races.

She said the social problems facing the Indians were a matter of great concern to the country.

Ahmad Kamaruzaman Mohamed Baria (BN-Jerantut) and Hashim Ismail (BN-Ledang) spoke about the moral decline among youth and warned that if

this problem was not checked it would bring distruction to the country.

Ahmad Kamaruzaman claimed that illegal motorcycle racing organisers were offering a woman as the first prize.

Hashim alleged that Malay youths were only keen on entertainment and short term gains and this had led them to lag behind youths of other races.

He said very few Malays obtained first class honours degree at local universities as most Malay students were not interested in reading and attending Islamic religious knowledge classes.

Mohamed Khaled Nordin (BN-Johor Baharu) proposed that an independent committee be set up to study the reasons why Malay students were weak in studies.

Schools which failed to attain outstanding results in public examinations should also be investigated, he said.

He also proposed that science centres be set up in every state and not just in the capital city to generate greater interest in science among students.

The Dewan will sit again tomorrow. --BERNAMA

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