

11 FEB 1997

Conscript

NATIONAL SERVICE INAPPROPRIATE TO ADDRESS YOUTH PROBLEMS, SAYS KIT SIANG

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 11 (Bernama) -- Compulsory national service for school leavers is inappropriate to address the social problems of youths, the Parliamentary Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang said today.

The most important time to deal with the root problem of social ills affecting youths was in schools through character building and not after leaving school, he added.

He suggested that apart from dealing with youth problems, the proposed national service also be used for nation-building to bond the different races of the new generation into a "Bangsa Malaysia" (Malaysian race) and to strengthen the military resilience of the population.

Lim was responding to various solutions forwarded to deal with the multitude of social ills affecting youths highlighted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad recently.

Among the solutions, Lim said was to turn the compulsory national service into compulsory national social service which, he claimed, would make the national service a modified form of Rakan Muda.

"At most, compulsory national social service can only address the symptoms but not the root causes of social problems of youths," he added.

Lim proposed that the Cabinet convene a National Education Conference to ascertain why schools have failed to produce strong, competent, caring and responsible citizens as reflected by the multitude of social ills affecting youths. -- BERNAMA

MSL LDB