

21 OCT 1997

Parliament-Debate

SOME CORPORATE SECTOR MEMBERS DOUBLE-FACED, SAYS GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHER

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 21 (Bernama) -- A government backbencher revealed in the Dewan Rakyat today that there are some corporate sector members who are double-faced and capable of betraying the country's top leaders during the current economic crisis.

Ruhanie Ahmad (BN-Parit Sulong), the chairman of the Government Backbenchers Club, said that they could easily shift their patriotism.

"Some of them have already expressed their full support for the prime minister and his deputy in overcoming the economic crisis faced by the country.

"But, there are some who resorted to stabbing the country's top leaders in the back," he said during the debate on the 1998 Budget.

Ruhanie said that they should realise that whatever riches they had enjoyed were the result of the struggles of the government and the sacrifices of the people.

He however said that there were some who were really aware of their social obligations.

He said that the present situation calls for all parties to join forces to overcome the problem faced by the country.

Ruhanie believed that the support expressed by Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat and DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang for the Barisan Nasional government leaders was sincere and genuine.

He said that Malaysia's proposal to control currency trading was opposed by many parties but he hoped that they would study the paper on "Control Actions For International Currency Speculation" agreed to by the leaders of the G7 member countries in France in June last year.

The main objective of the paper was to curb currency speculation at the international level as it posed a danger to the economy of countries especially small and developing nations, he said.

Ruhanie also criticised the foreign media for their biased reports on Dr Mahathir.

Ruhanie hoped that the 1998 Budget which was aimed at further strengthening the country's economic fundamentals and to restore the confidence of investors would not pose a burden to the lower income group.

He said that measures should be taken to encourage and coordinate efforts by the private sector in food production on a large scale.

The increased import of food from RM4.6 billion in 1989 to RM9.1 billion last year had resulted in the outflow of large amounts of money, he said.

Ruhanie said that research and development should be further enhanced for the food industry.

Robert Lau Hoi Chew (BN-Sibu) said that now was the time for the people to join forces to face the economic crisis caused by the foreign attack on the ringgit.

He said that although the ringgit had depreciated, it was a blessing for the country's tourism industry.

Malaysia would surely attract tourists from countries whose currencies were stronger than Malaysia's as they would be able to spend more in the country.

The lower ringgit would also contribute to changing the people's preference for imported items for locally produced goods.

Lau supported the proposal to reduce the imports of heavy machinery but

called on the government to reconsider allowing the import of heavy machinery for the logging and the construction sectors and the import of construction materials.

He said that the restriction might affect the country's housing programme and the logging sector especially in Sarawak.

Hashim Ismail (BN-Ledang) suggested the setting up of a national economic advisory panel headed by the economic adviser to the government and comprising local and foreign economic experts.

The panel could make the appropriate recommendations to the government to overcome the present crisis, he said.

He also proposed that the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (MIER) be restructured to meet current needs.

Michael Lisa Kaya (BN-Bukit Mas) called on the government to review the proposed increase in passport fees as it posed a burden to the lower income group.

He said that international passports were essential for people in Sarawak to travel to Brunei to work or to visit relatives.

The Dewan will sit again tomorrow. -- BERNAMA

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