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Parliament-Debate

GIVE FARMERS MORE SUBSIDIES FOR POISONS AND FERTILISERS, GOVT URGED

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 5 (Bernama) -- A government backbencher today called on the government to give farmers additional subsidies for poisons and fertilisers to help them cut the padi production cost.

Wan Hanafiah Wan Mat Saman (BN-Pokok Sena) told the Dewan Rakyat that although the government currently provided subsidies for fertilisers, the farmers still had to spend a lot on additional fertilisers and poisons to improve their padi yield.

They had to spend about RM800 in production cost to make a profit of only RM200 per relung (measure of land) and giving them additional subsidies would ease their burden, he said when debating the Supply Bill 1999 in the Dewan Rakyat.

Datuk Hanafi Ramli (BN-Jerlun) said although the government had taken steps to raise the padi price and fix the price of super grade padi to help the farmers, this was still not enough.

It should instead look for ways to reduce the production cost so that the farmers could enjoy better income, he said.

He also suggested that the Alor Setar airport runway be extended to accommodate bigger aircraft to promote tourism.

Fu Ah Kiow (BM-Mentakab) said the Danaharta and Danamodal funds to recapitalise the banking system should be used carefully because the country could not afford to fail in its recovery measures for the banking system or the economic foundation would be further undermined.

Although he welcomed the RM4 billion allocation for infrastructure projects under the development expenditure, he said the government must ensure that only projects capable of generating economic activities were implemented.

On the services sector, he said the government should step up the liberalisation of container haulage in the local shipping industry to create healthy competition and enhance productivity and effectiveness of the service.

Datuk Sukri Mohamed (BN-Machang), called on the government to be sensitive to the people's problems and to resolve them quickly to overcome any dissatisfaction.

"I believe that if the people's problems are resolved, whatever reform movement set up would not be able to influence them," he said

He urged the government to cut red tape to ensure fast implementation of development projects and to involve elected representatives in such projects, especially in the rural areas, as they understood the people's needs better.

He also called on Prime Minister and First Finance Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to review his decision not to pay civil servants a bonus this year.

"In the interest of the 800,000-odd civil servants who have worked hard to help the government implement its policies, I urge the prime minister, if the government cannot afford to pay a bonus, to study another system to at least give an incentive...a sum that will reduce their burden in preparing for the new school session and Hari Raya Aidil Fitri," he said.

Sukri also urged the government to speed up the investigations into former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's allegation of police brutality while under detention under the Internal Security Act (ISA).

He said any police officer found to be involved should be prosecuted as this was the only way to restore the people's confidence in the police force.

His call was supported by two Barisan Nasional MPs, Datuk Abu Zahar Ujang (BN-Kuala Pilah) and Dr Nungsari Ahmad Radhi (BN-Balik Pulau) who wanted the government to immediately announce the findings of the investigations.

Datuk Dr Kamal Salleh (BN-Wangsa Maju) said that despite criticisms from several foreign parties, Bank Negara's role was important in creating a banking system capable of safeguarding the country's reserves and helping to restore the economy.

He urged the government to review the role of the central bank which is now also responsible for insurance, housing and several other sectors not directly related to finance.

Muhammad Abdullah (BN-Pasir Puteh) called on the federal government to immediately take over the management of water supply in Kelantan following the state government's failure to play its role, resulting in the people having to dig wells for water.

Vincent Lim Kuo Phau (BN-Petaling Jaya Utara) said the government should strictly enforce the ban on smoking to curb this unhealthy activity.

He said that despite the huge amount spent, the campaigns to teach the people not to smoke in non-smoking areas had not been effective.

The Dewan will sit again on Monday.

-- BERNAMA

RZS HAK JK