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Parliament-Debate

BANKS MUST BE FACILITATORS TO HELP PROBLEM COMPANIES, DEWAN RAKYAT TOLD

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 26 (Bernama) -- A government back-bencher told the Dewan Rakyat today that banks in the country should play a facilitator role to assist cash-strapped companies particularly during the economic downturn.

Datuk Dr Kamal Salih (BN-Wangsa Maju) said they should be more accommodative in helping to revive deserving companies.

As business partners, banks should not merely wait to recover their loans but instead issue fresh loans to enable companies to venture into new business sectors, he said when debating the Supplementary Supply Bill (1999) (No 2) 1999.

"I'm worried with no help from the banks, many companies would go bust and this would have a bearing on the economic recovery with a large number of unemployed people in the country," said Kamal, a former executive director of the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (MIER).

Chang See Ten (BN-Gelang Patah) suggested that a special scheme be introduced to enable the people to pay for the healthcare facilities in the country

He said the scheme could be set up as part of the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) or in the form of a medical insurance with a reasonable premium.

He feared that the people could ill-afford to pay for the healthcare costs if more health and medical services were privatised.

Meanwhile, Karpal Singh (DAP-Jelutong) used the debate session to reply to a front-page report in a English daily which criticised him as "kurang ajar" (ill-bred) and an unethical lawyer.

Referring to the report in "The Sun", he said: " Why...I'm not afraid... the Prime Minister is afraid....using his crony Vincent Tan to make accusations."

"On having properties in Thailand in particular...where's the proof, why tell lies, why use newspapers like this," he asked.

The report quoted Umno executive secretary Tengku Datuk Adnan Tengku Mansor as saying that Karpal is an "unethical lawyer" who is "definitely kurang ajar" in court in the ongoing sodomy trial of former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Tengku Adnan said Karpal was using the courts as a platform to promote his political agenda and propaganda.

Karpal's speech was interrupted many times by government back-benchers who were unhappy with him for not using the time to debate the bill but to touch on issues such as Anwar's alleged arsenic poisoning and the front-page report.

Karpal also denied that he was paid high legal fees for being Anwar's counsel.

"Not even a sen, its free...(This is) all for justice. Not for Parti Keadilan," he said.

Noh Omar (BN-Tanjung Karang) then stood up and asked to record in the handsard what Karpal had just said.

Datuk Ruhanie Ahmad (BN-Parit Sulong) told the House that PAS Constitution did not explicitly spelt out the party's ambition to set up an Islamic country.

"Article 5 (1) of the constitution only mention about the party's intention to struggle for the existence of a society and a system of governance encompassing Islamic laws and values acceptable to ALLAH," he

said.

He said PAS' preparedness to accept the Alternative Front's common manifesto with no mention of the party's plan to set up an Islamic state clearly showed that PAS had actually no such plans.

Wan Hanafiah Wan Mat Saman (BN-Pokok Sena) said the Election Commission should tighten conditions on transfers of polling centres to ensure opposition party supporters did not choose polling centres to their whims.

"I've received a complain that the commission now allowed a person with a Kuala Lumpur address to vote in other states without having to produce the change of address card.

" Just imagine... what will happen to Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) if opposition supporters from other states were allowed to vote in large numbers in Kubang Pasu," he said.

Wan Hanafiah also said he had received a report that PAS had used dirty tactics to reduce the number of pro-government voters by making false reports to the commission that these voters have died and asked their names to be struck out from the electoral rolls.

Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Mohamed Nazri Aziz, in winding up the debate at committee stage, said the commission would for the first time station its officers at postal vote delivery centres in the upcoming general election.

He said the commission had decided to set up 300 such centres mostly in Sabah and Sarawak.

The move was to ensure there was no cheating in postal votes as was alleged by the Opposition, he said.

Nazri also explained that the commission took a long time to verify the new electoral list as it had to go through 14 legal processes.

The dewan will sit again tomorrow.

-- BERNAMA

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