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Call for minimum wage to protect local workers

reports on "Dewan Rakyat" by Ramlan Said; Hayatudin; Ainon Mohd
A MINIMUM wage rate should be introduced to ensure a balance between achieving rapid economic growth and the welfare of workers.

In making the proposal, Rohani Abd Karim (BN-Santubong) said the minimum wage or measures on a healthy environment for workers was needed.

This could be seen from employers who preferred foreign workers to locals to avoid paying higher wages.

"Perhaps the time has come to consider having a minimum wage rate," she said when debating the mid-term review of the Seventh Malaysia Plan.

The review was tabled in the Dewan Rakyat last week by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Dr Tan Seng Giaw (DAP-Kepong) said although Pengurusan Danaharta Nasional Bhd had acquired 50 to 60 per cent of banks' non-performing loans, the latter would only get the funds after five years.

"They can be considered as bankrupt during the five-year period," he said.

"Actually, the NPLs are acquired to assist the cash flow of banks, so the Government must source for funds to pay the banks much earlier."

Tan asked for details to be made public on local funds raised by the Government from the Employees' Provident Fund, Petronas, Perkeso and the Pilgrims' Management Fund to tackle the economic crisis.

BN MP for Bukit Bintang Dr Lee Chong Meng lamented on how easy it was for some parts of the city to be hit by flash floods after a few hours of downpour.

He said City Hall must be given more funds to address the matter, especially to improve the city's drainage system.

Hashim Jasin (Pas-Arau) spoke on more measures needed to combat moral decline, saying that the nation was not only experiencing an economic crisis but also one on moral and values.

Dr Tan Yee Kew (BN-Klang) spoke on sexual harassment, saying that as the country became more and more industrialised and commercialised, and more women entered the job market, such problems often cropped up.

While expressing her appreciation to the Human Resources Ministry for coming out with the Code of Practice on the Prevention and Eradication of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace, she felt only workers in large organisations, manufacturing and commercial establishments would benefit.

"It offers little protection to female workers in small factories, hawker stores and restaurants or salesgirls and promoters," she said.

Datuk Lau Ngan Siew (BN-Sandakan) appealed for the "flying doctors" service in Sabah to be upgraded with more flights.

He also wanted the authorities to take stern action against those responsible for polluting rivers in the State. Efforts to rehabilitate polluted waterways must also be intensified.

Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar (BN-Batang Lupar) called for the tender process of Government contracts to be simplified to prevent project delay.

Contractors who completed their projects satisfactorily must be paid immediately as late payment would pose a problem to them.

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