

24 AUG 1999

Abdullah-Teachers

DPM PERPLEXED BY TEACHERS WHO TALK POLITICS IN CLASS

KUANTAN, Aug 24 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said he finds it perplexing that some teachers need to talk politics to very young pupils in their class.

He described such teachers as irresponsible as their main task was to impart more important knowledge to young Malaysians.

"Talking politics in the class is not a teachers's task. Why must such fresh minds be polluted with political issues which these young children can't even grasp with in the first place," he said.

He was speaking to reporters after opening the national-level Women's Day celebrations on behalf of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad here today.

About 2,000 women, representing various organisations, attended the function.

"That's unbecoming of the teacher," he said when approached on a news report that an Alor Setar primary school teacher had allegedly been poisoning young minds to hate the government.

The report quoted Umno Supreme Council Member Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz as saying that the case was highlighted by a mother at last Sunday's dialogue with Barisan Nasional leaders in Kedah.

The mother referred to in the news report has a child studying in standard three at the school.

Abdullah said the Education Ministry would have to investigate the case and decide whether the teacher concerned had breached discipline or the code of conduct.

The deputy prime minister was also asked about the opposition criticising Dr Mahathir's recent visit to China as a political and a vote-wooing gimmick.

Abdullah said Dr Mahathir's visit had nothing to do with the impending general election.

"The visit has long been arranged. Any prime minister for that matter would have made the visit as part of his official duties and not to fish for votes," he said.

In his speech earlier, Abdullah urged Malaysian women to dismantle obstacles to them securing better representation at all levels of decision-making or functioning as progressive wife, mother, worker and leader.

Abdullah said the impressive accomplishments of Malaysian women thus far came about not because of a set quota for women but due to own merit and capabilities.

The increasingly-modern Malaysian society on the other hand, he said, should not look down upon women who chose to devote themselves to the noble job of being full-time housewives.

Abdullah said going by the statistics, the governing Barisan Nasional coalition had been providing vast opportunities for self-upliftment to women through education and employment.

Last year alone, females accounted for 65.3 per cent of students who enrolled for pre-university courses and 54.5 per cent of the 79,014 undergraduates in local private universities.

In terms of the country's workforce, the women's share rose from 45.8 per cent in 1990 to 47.1 per cent in 1995, he said.

However, Abdullah lamented that certain quarters among Malaysians still

regarded women as not suitable to be joint bread-winners while others were expressedly bias against pretty women.

Abdullah's remarks were in apparent reference to Menteri Besar of opposition-led Kelantan Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat's statement that the state civil service preferred to give jobs to the not-so-good looking women over pretty ones who could easily get rich and high-ranking men to marry.

"And there are also people who would rather not let women handle political matters if they gain power," he added, again apparently referring to the opposition.

-- BERNAMA

ROS RYN