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Proposal for politicians to serve as diplomats

POLITICIANS who have contributed significantly to the country should be given due recognition and opportunities to represent the country as diplomats.

In making the call, Senator Datuk Zainuddin Maidin said being politicians, they would be able to adapt well.

Zainuddin said although politicians were not trained in this field, their vast experience in politics and in the Government could contribute significantly.

He said there was a pressing need for this as Malaysian students abroad especially in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, New Zealand and Japan were exposed to anti-Malaysian and anti-Mahathir sentiments.

Most of them, he said, were influenced by what was published in the foreign Press, especially in London and New York.

"The foreign Press will not give the `real picture'. Therefore it is not a pro-active approach if the Government only circulates Press releases on such matters when the need arises."

Speaking during the debate on the Supplementary Supply Bill 1998/1999, he said there should be a collective effort from all parties to address this problem.

"The Government must clarify any big issues which involve the current political and economic situation in the country. However, the classification must be made through journalistic approach and not through mundane government documents."

He also suggested that senior officials in Wisma Putra not be given the choice of the country they want to serve as diplomats. Instead the Government must ensure that only selective officers were sent to places considered important to the country.

"They should be sent to places which have the most Malaysian students like the United Kingdom and the United States. The respective High Commissions should shoulder the responsibility of making the students aware of the country's policies."

Senator Datuk Mohd Zuki Kamaluddin touched on the importance of information technology for the creation of a knowledge-based society.

He said Malaysia should not be left behind in IT as it would be the cutting edge of economic development.

"Therefore, there should be specific policies and measures to transform the country into a knowledge and information based economy," he said.

He added even with the setting up of the Multimedia Super Corridor and Cyberjaya, the country still lagged behind compared to other developed countries in the region like Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore.

To counter this, Mohd Zuki said the Government must implement various strategies to compete with these three countries first before thinking about competing with Japan, the United States and countries in the European Union.

Senator Datuk Ghazi @ Hasbullah Ramli urged the Government to extend the reading, writing and counting method (3M) practised in primary schools to include the thinking concept as well.

He said this was necessary to ensure that pupils could enhance their thinking capabilities at a young age.

"This aspect of education is always neglected. If we include this in the teaching method, indirectly it will help pupils possess critical thinking

and learn to comprehend issues wisely," he said.

Senator Mastika Junaidah Husein urged civil servants to reform their work culture and not take things for granted as they had a duty and responsibility to the people and nation.

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