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Parliament-Debate

MALAYSIA TOLD TO SEIZE OPPORTUNITIES OF GLOBALISATION

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 28 (Bernama) -- Malaysia should grab the opportunities arising from globalisation to place itself in the forefront of the Asean economies, a government backbencher told the Dewan Rakyat today.

Husni Hanadzlah (BN-Tambun) said Malaysia had good potential to attract foreign investors compared to other Asean countries, including Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia.

"In the globalisation process, there are opportunities that we can seize using the position and ability of our country," he said when debating the 2000 Budget.

He said Malaysia should take advantage of globalisation to make heavy investments in Indonesia to help revive its neighbouring country's economy.

Malaysia was in a position to do this as it had proven itself in implementing its own measures to revive its economy, he said.

The social and cultural backgrounds of Indonesia made it more suitable to get help from Malaysia rather than the United States and Europe, he said.

"There are opportunities to be tapped in Indonesia, and we can gain from them because Indonesia has a similar culture with us," he said.

He hoped that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's visit to Indonesia next month would pave the way for such efforts.

Husni urged the government to consider giving loans for Malaysian entrepreneurs to venture overseas, saying this could be a long-term measure for sustaining economic growth.

The government should not just concentrate on economic recovery efforts without having long-term plans, he said.

He spoke at length on the banking sector and urged the government to have a single licence for all the three types of banking services.

"Having a single licence for commercial banks, merchant banks and finance companies is expected to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the banking sector," said Husni, an economist.

Expressing concern on the possibility of local banks becoming overzealous in a bid to match international banks, he suggested that banks and the government regularly monitor the activities of the merged banking groups.

"In their enthusiasm to compete, local banks may focus on the corporate sector, as is done by international banks, and neglect the less important sectors," he said.

He urged the government to study the form of competition that would take shape later.

"Would the government allow our banks to focus on certain niche markets only?" he said.

Opposition Leader Datuk Fadzil Noor welcomed the government's decision to increase the allocations for scholarships and loans to students of public and private institutions of higher learning.

"This one we can support," he said.

However, if the Barisan Alternatif were in power, education would not be commercialised and treated as an industry, he said.

"Increasing loans will not help students in the long run because from the start they have been ingrained with the loan mentality," he said.

Fadzil also questioned the Finance Minister's proposal to allow

Employees Provident Fund members to withdraw part of their savings for buying computers and financing their children's education.

"I think this does not meet the philosophy and basic aim of making the contributions," he said.

Dr Tan Seng Giaw (DAP-Kepong) hoped that the figures contained in the budget were correct and could prove that the country's economic recovery was real.

"Figures and statistics can usually be manipulated by certain quarters. If we view them from another aspect, they may not reflect the actual situation," he said.

The House will sit again tomorrow.

-- BERNAMA

NHA YBY