

17 APR 2001

Parliament-Debate

EPF SHOULD HAVE DISCUSSIONS WITH MTUC TO AVOID PICKET

KUALA LUMPUR, April 17 (Bernama) -- The Employees Provident Fund (EPF) was today advised to hold talks with the Malaysian Trade Union's Congress (MTUC) to restore the confidence of contributors and to avoid a picket against the pension fund.

Datuk Ahmad Husni Hanadzlah (BN-Tambun) said MTUC's suggestion to hold a picket to protest against the two per cent reduction in EPF contribution to spur the economy, was uncalled for.

"This is a serious matter, usually a picket is held to back claims for a salary increase or to express dissatisfaction against an employer but this time a picket is being staged to show a vote of no confidence against the EPF," he said when debating the Supplementary Supply Bill (2000 and 2001) in the Dewan Rakyat here today.

He added that the EPF should explain various issues related to the pension fund like the doubts concerning the annuity scheme and the low dividend rate raised by the MTUC before this.

Ahmad added that any explanation and discussion held between both parties would solve many problems, clear doubts and confusion that has arisen.

Ahmad Husni welcomed the government's move to appoint Azlan Mohd Zainol, the former Managing Director of Arab-Malaysian Bank Berhad as the new chief executive of the EPF.

He said since the EPF was a large financial institution, it required someone of sound financial and investment experience.

Ahmad Husni in his debate also asked what action the government had meted out against the senior officers of Perbadanan Usahawan Nasional Bhd (PUNB) who tried to sell bonds worth US\$5 billion.

He said as a result of the officers' action, PUNB had to take out an important notice in the Asian Wall Street Journal to avert any discussions on the bond issue.

"But the notice in itself gave a negative impression that there are insincere PUNB officers. The said individuals should be dealt with severely," he said.

Mohamad Sabu (PAS-Kuala Kedah) in his debate asked the government to accord more attention to the welfare of police and army personnel and to ensure that they are well compensated for assuming very heavy responsibilities.

"Police are quick to act when it comes to arresting a person but the government is slow in disbursing for instance last year's special payment which was only paid after Aidil Fitri," he said.

Mohamad said he viewed seriously the statements by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Inspector General of Police who both said there was an attempt to get former police, army and commando personnel to topple the government in militant street demonstrations.

"I view this seriously. When there are more disgruntled persons than satisfied people then it means of the leadership of today is not popular anymore. Why does this happens?" asked Mohamad.

He also called on the government to immediately release the seven Parti Keadilan Nasional and reformasi activists who have been detained under the Internal Security Act or charge them in court.

As a former ISA detainee, Mohamad said the excuse to use the ISA on them was not warranted as the gathering to hand over the memorandum to the

Human Rights Commission took place in a peaceful manner.

Datuk Ruhanie Ahmad (BN-Parit Sulong) in his debate said the authorities must investigate the procedures which were used by the PAS-led government to "siphon" the RM40 million which was channelled by the Federal government to Kolej Ugama Sultan Zainal Abidin, Institut Lanjutan Teknikal Terengganu and other religious schools in the state.

"What will happen to the students in these institutions? he asked.

Ruhanie also advised opposition members of Parliament to raise relevant and authentic issues in the Dewan Rakyat so as not to turn discussions into cheap debates.

"I hope the opposition will be a responsible opposition," he said.

Meanwhile, Datuk Dr Yusof Yacob (BN-Sipitang) in his debate said the government should take stern action to prevent fishing using explosives which was very rampant in Sabah.

He said this activity has been going on for so long that corals in the area have been destroyed in the process.

He said one of the steps that can be taken to prevent this kind of activity was to prohibit the use of urea nitrate fertilisers in the making of the explosives by placing it under the controlled goods category.

"By this move, at least the incidence of fishing using explosives can be reduced," he said.

Meanwhile, Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Chan Kong Choy in winding up the debate said the EPF consulted its investment advisory panel before making any investment decision or purchased any shares in companies.

He said the advisory panel was guided by the principle of long-term profits when its advices the EPF on any investment decision.

"Maybe at the beginning the EPF may incur losses on the investment but two three years down the line, it will rake in profits," he said.

-- BERNAMA

NHA HS DVS