

17 OCT 2001  
Parliament-Islam  
WHEN A DAP MP TALKS ABOUT ISLAM

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 17 (Bernama) -- A Member of Parliament from the DAP caused quite a stir in the Dewan Rakyat when he talked on Islam.

Chong Eng (DAP-Bukit Mertajam) said that the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), MCA and Gerakan had strongly objected to an Islamic state during the recent Sarawak election.

But they supported it instead when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad declared that Malaysia is an Islamic state.

"The MCA, Gerakan and SUPP leaders tell the non-Muslims that the Islamic state mentioned by Dr Mahathir is a secular Islamic state," he said when debating the Supplementary Supply Bill (2001) (No.2) 2001.

"So, I want to know from the Honourable Prime Minister whether this is so," he said.

As this juncture, Robert Lau Hoi Chew (BN-Sibu), Datuk Mohamad Haji Aziz (BN-Sri Gading), Datuk Mohd Ali Haji Hassan (BN-Tebrau), Datuk Bung Mokhtar Radin (BN-Kinabatangan), Datuk Ruhanie Ahmad (BN-Parit Sulong) and Shahziman Abu Mansor (BN-Tampin) stood up to seek clarification.

This led to verbal exchange between the backbenchers and Chong, forcing the Deputy Speaker Lim Si Cheng to remind the MPs to observe the standing order.

But Chong, in continuing his speech, said: "We don't need an Islamic state to promote Islam. The United States is a secular country and yet Islam is a fast-growing religion there. We must remember that this country belongs to all. Muslims and non-Muslims alike have the rights to determine the country's development."

The remarks unleashed another round of verbal exchange as more Muslim Members of Parliament joined in.

Lim was quick to keep the situation under control by announcing that Chong's 20 minutes were over.

Bung Mokhtar, who spoke during the debate later, took Chong to task for talking about Islam.

"We can debate on whatever issues on Islam but we must have knowledge on Islam. If we don't, it could lead to wrong interpretation of the actual situation," he said.

-- BERNAMA  
NZ NZ ABG