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Parliament-winding (Unity)

NATIONAL SOCIAL COUNCIL TO BE SET UP

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 30 (Bernama) -- The National Social Council will be set up to handle all aspects and matters pertaining to national unity as well as social development, the Dewan Rakyat here was told today.

Parliamentary Secretary to the National Unity and Social Development Ministry Datuk S Veerasingam said the council would be chaired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The National Social Council would replace the proposed National Unity Council, he said when winding up the debate during the committee stage on allocation for the ministry in the Budget 2003.

On efforts to create a Malaysian race, Veerasingam said the success would depend on the role played by individuals, regardless of whether they were bumiputeras or non-bumiputeras.

Earlier, during the debate Datuk Ruhanie Ahmad (BN-Parit Sulong) said the society at large especially students in institutions of higher learning were still confused with the concept of a Malaysian race, thus hindering efforts to promote unity among the various races.

He said national unity should be based on three doctrines, namely the Federal Constitution, Rukunegara (national principles) and Vision 2020 and it would be improper to set up a Malaysian race by neglecting these documents.

On special privileges of bumiputeras, as stated in the Constitution, Veerasingam said: "The social contract which exists in the constitution must be known, understood and practised by every individual in this country."

Meanwhile, on street beggars, he said 434 were detained between January to August this year in 66 raids conducted by agencies under the ministry.

"However, the problem persists. There are still beggars around. We appeal to the public not to give alms to the beggars. We know Malaysians are generous and if they want to give, there are other places," he said.

The issue of street beggars was raised by Dr Tan Seng Giaw (DAP-Kepong) who urged the government clear them of the street, including monks and children.

On the Rukun Tetangga (RT), he said more than 80 percent were active and playing wider roles, including community development.

"Many resident associations have applied to set up their own RT in their respective areas," he said.

Meanwhile, Chang See Ten (BN-Gelang Patah) said the government should withdrawal financial assistance from inactive RT and give it to active ones.

-- BERNAMA

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