

11 MAR 2003
Parliament-Debate
NEW BBC CHAIRMAN DOMINATES FIRST-DAY SITTING

KUALA LUMPUR, March 11 (Bernama) -- The new chairman of the Government Backbenchers Club (BBC), Datuk Mohd Zin Mohamed, was in his element today, dominating proceedings on the first day of the Dewan Rakyat sitting.

In the question-and-answer session, Mohd Zin set the ball rolling by posing the first question.

And he also kicked off the debate session by tabling a motion under Standing Order 18(1) for the House to be adjourned to debate the impending United States-led war on Iraq.

The House approved the motion and adjourned proceedings for a one-hour debate, which was to express the country's strong opposition to war.

The MP for Shah Alam then took up the whole of the debate time from 11.15am to 4.30pm to present the motion of thanks for the Yang di-Pertuan Agong's opening address.

Mohd Zin, whose 51-page speech is themed "Memperkasa Kekuatan Dalam" (Reinforcing Internal Strength), however, could only complete 31 pages and will continue his speech tomorrow.

Mohd Zin became the BBC chairman at the end of last year, replacing Datuk Jamaluddin Jarjis, who is now the Second Finance Minister.

During his speech, which touched on a wide range of issues, including economy, politics, international relations and education, Mohd Zin was interrupted by several members seeking clarifications.

Mohd Zin said Malaysia's ability in developing various Islamic products, including on financial services, in accordance with the requirements of the religion should be seen as an important achievement for the country.

He said this had not only improved awareness among Muslims on the demands of the religion but also attracted non-Muslims to such services.

The Islamic financial and banking system was now accepted by international banks and this showed that such products had potential for further growth, he said.

Islamic financial institutions were currently expanding rapidly and controlling US\$180 billion throughout the world, while in Malaysia Islamic banking had a 8.2 percent or RM58.9 billion share of the local banking industry, he said.

Mohd Zin also touched on the setting up of ValueCap Sdn Bhd, which he said had created an impact in checking share market manipulators.

On biotechnology, he said the launch of the National Biotechnology Policy this year would make this sector the main economic driver after the information and communications technology era.

"The demand for biotechnology is expected to shoot up to US\$50 billion by 2005. Malaysia is now placed among 12 countries acknowledged as mega biodiversity centres," he said.

The other countries with this status are China, India, Indonesia, Zaire, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Australia.

Mohd Zin also urged entrepreneurs in the small- and medium-scale industries to make a paradigm shift to remain relevant and competitive in the era of globalisation and liberalisation.

They should intensify use of technology and be mindful of product quality by striving to meet international standards and earn ISO 9001:2000 certification, he said.

Mohd Zin also said efforts to merge tour agencies should be speeded up

to make the promotion of Malaysia's tourism products more effective.

On politics and international relations, Mohd Zin said the country's success in organising the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit last month was something to be proud off and Malaysia should remain vocal on world issues.

"We hope Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's call to outlaw war would be taken seriously because it is the basis for creating a situation of peace and prosperity," he said.

On the Sekolah Agama Rakyat (SAR) issue, Mohd Zin said it had been politicised by opposition parties.

It was most saddening when every change made for the good of education was opposed and turned into political capital by the opposition, he said.

Mohd Zin's remark caused an uproar as it prompted several opposition members to spring to their feet and seek clarification.

The House will sit again tomorrow.

-- BERNAMA

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