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Umno-Motion (Education/Religion)

BOOST EFFORTS TO TURN NATIONAL SCHOOLS INTO PREMIER SCHOOLS, GOVT TOLD

KUALA LUMPUR, June 21 (Bernama) -- The federal government has been urged to continue to give priority and place emphasis on turning national schools into premier schools to become schools of choice of the various races in the country and where true understanding of Islam is inculcated among Muslim students.

A representative of the Johor Umno liaison body, Datuk Gapar Gurrohu said that education and religion were issues which need serious attention by the government especially in the face of globalisation which requires the people to be knowledgeable and possess resilience based on a strong religious background.

"That is why education and religion have been tabled simultaneously as an integrated motion this year," he said when tabling the motion on education/religion on the third and final day of the 54th Umno general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here today.

Gapar said that education and religion were essential aspects to produce a dynamic society and such efforts should be given emphasis by Umno to ensure that the country would continue to be helmed by the Malays.

He said that efforts to boost the confidence of the community towards national schools should be streamlined following the tendency among parents at present to no longer consider national schools as schools of choice for their children.

"Malay parents prefer to send their children to privately-run community religious schools (SAR) while non-Malay parents prefer to send their children to national type Chinese and Tamil primary schools," he said.

Gapar said that this trend, if left unchecked, would have a negative impact on national schools which should serve as centres for national integration.

He said that the authorities including teachers should exercise wisdom in inculcating Islamic values in national schools as a misperception existed among non-Malay parents that such a move was an attempt to turn national schools into branches of Islamic educational schools.

He commended the federal government for its move in terminating the annual per capita assistance extended to the SARs as they were now no longer relevant in the national perspective.

Gapar said that the SARs which had existed for hundreds of years in the country could no longer serve to provide religious education and the learning of modern subjects like science and this role could be played more effectively by the national schools.

"In fact, the SARs have also today been abused by certain parties which use them to incite (hatred) and this is an insult to the Malays and will not benefit them," he said.

Gapar said that the performance of the students in public examinations was declining as a result of such incitement and external influence.

"In the Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR) examination for 2002, only 0.2 per cent of the students in the SARs scored the perfect 'A' for all subjects compared to other schools like the religious secondary schools which recorded 15.9 per cent," he said.

He also said that the poor performance of the SARs was due to the lack of proper basic training among the principals and the teaching staff of such schools.

Gapar lauded the move by the government to introduce approaches in the

teaching of science and mathematics in the English Language which also help improve the command of the language among the students.

"Such a move is not detrimental to the Malay language as the national language or undermine the sovereignty of the Malay language," he said.

He also proposed that the family institution be given attention through solid programmes as the quest for excellence begins from the home.

Gapar also placed on record appreciation for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who steps down in October as Umno president and prime minister and recalled his contributions as Education Minister in 1974 when he succeeded in dealing with student demonstrations that year.

Earlier, Gapar announced seven resolutions on the education/religion motion. They are the realisation that:

- * education is vital as the key to develop individuals who are knowledgeable and possess moral and religious values to contribute to the well-being of the community, the sovereignty of the race and the prosperity of the nation as well as the continuity of Umno's struggle;

- * only balanced knowledge covering physical, material and spiritual aspects will ensure individuals of integrity;

- * the Malays must excel, be competitive and build resilience in facing the challenges of globalisation;

- * the integrity of the race depended on equal quality of education;

- * racial unity and national integration are the key to the nation's peace and well-being;

- * science and technology are significant in life in this century and the future;

- * the weaknesses of Muslims today are due to them being left behind in their preparedness in improving themselves in terms of knowledge, the economy and management of their resources.

Meanwhile, in supporting the motion, Selangor's representative Datuk Zainal Sakom said that national schools failed to become the schools of choice of the majority of the people in the country due to the attitude of certain parties including the administration of national schools in becoming overly emotional and overzealous in incorporating Islamic values among the students.

He said that the move to change the terminology of the Bahasa Malaysia subject to Bahasa Melayu in national schools in 1992 following pressure from the literary circle in the country also affected the status of national schools as premier schools.

"As such, the Selangor Umno proposes that the terminology Bahasa Melayu be switched back to Bahasa Malaysia," he said.

Zainal also proposed that students be taught the normal subjects from 7.30am to 12 noon and Islamic knowledge from 12 noon to 2pm.

"This will bring national schools to the forefront of obligatory religious education and students need no longer proceed to afternoon schools to seek knowledge in such aspects," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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