

25 SEP 2003

Parliament-Debate (Budget)

STATUS OF LIMBANG BORDER CLAIM RAISED IN PARLIAMENT

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 25 (Bernama) -- A Government-backbencher from Sarawak today raised the current status of discussions between the governments of Malaysia and Brunei on resolving the Limbang border issue.

Taking part in the debate on the Budget for next year, Henry Sum Agong (BN-Bukit Mas) said the people wanted to know the progress of the discussions and when the issue would be settled.

"The border claim issue had dragged on since independence and the people in Limbang, especially, want to know the actual situation," he said.

Elaborating on the issue outside of the House, Sum said the question mark hanging over the status of the claim had resulted in the people living in the area becoming reluctant to build settlements as they feared changes would occur once the issue was settled.

"So long as the problem existed, settlements could not be put up...until the border between the countries was fixed," he said.

The situation had also created difficulties to traders in the border area especially in Kuala Lurai, where most of them were operating on a temporary basis with incomplete facilities, he said.

In May this year, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in a statement after meeting Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei, had expressed the hope that the Limbang border issue could be resolved before he retired this October.

Dr Mahathir had said that a formula on the Limbang issue had already been conveyed to Brunei.

Limbang, sandwiched between Brunei and Sarawak, was once claimed by Brunei.

Nasaruddin Mat Isa (PAS-Yan) meanwhile asked the government to explain the term "threat to national security" which he said had caused confusion among many groups.

By way of example, he said, was the statement by the Election Commission to allow election rallies but the government disagreed on the excuse that it threatened national security or could have negative effects on peace.

"I do not know the actual meaning of this term as there had been many developments occurring in this country and action had been taken over programmes, individuals and groups in the name of threat to national security," he said.

Nasaruddin also asked the government to explain the status of the discussions between the Defence Ministry and the EC on allowing representatives of political parties into military camps to observe postal balloting there.

"Based on the statement by the EC Chairman who met with the Defence Minister it seemed some guarantee or answer will be given but till now, it has not been received," he said.

Datuk Yap Pian Hon (BN-Serdang) said the imbalance in the racial composition of the police force and military should not be ignored.

He proposed a special committee to convince more Chinese and Indians of the need to join the country's security forces.

They should be encouraged to join the school cadet police corps as an initial step, he said.

Ministers will wind up the Budget debate for their respective ministries from Monday.

Prime Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad
tabled the Budget 2004 on Sept 12.

Parliament will sit again on Monday.

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