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`Allocate period for religious education'

DEBATE ON EDUCATION AND RELIGION

UMNO Selangor has proposed that the Education ministry allocate a special period of between one and two hours daily in the national school curriculum for religious education.

Hulu Selangor division delegate Datuk Zainal Abidin Sakom said academic subjects should be taught from 7.30am to noon and religious education from 12pm to 2pm.

He said this was an ideal approach and would help erase the negative notion among non-Malays that national schools were secular and focused on religious education for Malays.

"It is time to get rid of that notion. National schools must be accepted by all Malaysians and recognised as the `chosen school' for the country," he said when supporting the motion on education and religion proposed by Johor delegate and Dewan Negara Deputy Speaker Senator Datuk Gapar Gurrohu from the Kluang Umno division.

"Likewise efforts must also be made to change the term Bahasa Melayu to Bahasa Malaysia and return its identity as the national language which belongs to all Malaysians."

Zainal Abidin said non-Malays did not acknowledge "sekolah kebangsaan" as national schools as they felt such schools had lost the "national" identity and preferred to send their children to Chinese or Tamil medium schools.

On religious education, he said the Government must ensure that Islam taught in schools was in keeping with the times.

Zainal Abidin also paid tribute to Dr Mahathir by singing a few lines from a popular P. Ramlee song - Di mana kan ku cari ganti (Where can I find a replacement).

Earlier, Gapar proposed that national schools be elevated as "superior" schools which provided integrated and comprehensive education for all races.

He said everyone must combine efforts to set new goals for national type schools so that they could change their image.

He also said a new module on religious education should be introduced to cover all aspects of religious education.

"The Government's move to centralise the administration and management of religious schools is good and will allow for a more systematic and standard approach in teaching religion."