MP: NS deaths warrant intervention
Malaysiakini.com
March 5, 2007
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The death of 10 National Service (NS) trainees to date has prompted a proposal that the parliamentary select committee on unity and national service should intervene.

DAP MP for Batu Gajah Fong Poh Kuan wrote to the committee on Saturday, suggesting that it seeks the input of National Service Training Council chairperson Lee Lam Thye.

A committee member herself, she asked that her suggestion be discussed during the next meeting scheduled from Wednesday to Friday in Port Dickson, Negri Sembilan.

"A representative of the NS Training Department has been attending committee meetings all this time. But this is not enough. We would need Lee to appear before the committee as (the safety of trainees) is a serious matter," she said when contacted.

"His constructive views would help the committee analyse and revise the National Service Training Act 2003, as this is part of our responsibility."

Urging the committee to approve her proposal, Fong added that this would enable Lee's views to be incorporated since he has already expressed these to Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

Fong pointed out in her letter that Section 6 and 12 of the Act empowers the NS Training Council to supervise implementation of the programme.

The council is also required to advise the minister on needs, in this case, Dr Maximus Johnity Ongkili who heads the select committee.

The committee is currently finalising its report, which will be presented to Parliament at the earliest opportunity.

Trainees Prema Elenchelian and Lliameera Azlan were the most recent casualties in the mandatory programme launched in 2004 to instil resilience and enhance integration among youths.

However, it has frequently been bogged down in administrative glitches, while fatalities, injuries fights among trainees and allegations of sexual assault have provided cause for concern over the years.

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Source : http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/64073