

No room for public talks on sensitive topics
Malaysiakini.com
Apr 23, 2007
Yoges Palaniappan

The government will not allow public forums that discuss sensitive racial issues and ridicule religions, the Dewan Rakyat was told today.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Abdullah Md Zin said the government has set up an action plan as well as a five-year plan through the National Unity and Integrity Department to improve national unity and integrity besides discussing matters relating to religion.

"A national unity advisory panel has also been formed under the department to discuss sensitive religious issues and to find ways to achieve harmony," he said in a written reply.

Abdullah was responding to Chong Hon Min (Sandakan-independent) who asked the prime minister to state the action plan in handling sensitive religious issues and to state the obstacles and problems faced.

The minister said the government, through Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (Ikim), always conducts forums, seminars and dialogue sessions involving various religions to discuss sensitive matters.

"We have also increased the number of awareness programmes where the public and political leaders will be reminded to always take into consideration the social contract stated in the Federal Constitution that was agreed since Independence," he added.

National Service

In another development, the government said it will increase the intake of National Service (NS) trainees in the years to come, provided it has enough resources.

Deputy Defence Minister Zainal Abidin Zin said the intakes have already seen an increase since its implementation.

"At first we had only 80,000 trainees, then the number became 85,000 and this year the number of NS trainees escalated to 100,000," he said.

He also revealed that parents whose children are studying abroad have asked if it is possible for their children to join NS when they return.

"We have received application letters from teenagers who were not chosen for the programme, wanting to join," he said.

According to the deputy minister, the trainees who have undergone the training and their parents have only positive feedback for the programme.

"Parents and teachers say that NS training has brought positive changes in the trainees in terms of commitment and respect to elders. Ninety percent of trainees have agreed that NS has given them valuable knowledge," he said.

Zainal (BN-Bagan Serai) was replying to Lim Bau Kee (BN-Padang Serai) who asked the Defence Ministry to state the positive impact of NS and whether the government is considering increasing the number of trainees.

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Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/66339>