

Chinese and Indians 'not patriotic enough'
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Defence Minister Zahid Hamidi reasoned that the low number of Chinese and Indian recruits in the military could be due to "lack of patriotism".

military tentera askar soldier malaysia 260307 wataniahZahid told the Dewan Rakyat this during Question time today when replying Mohd Jidin Shafee (BN-Setiu).

Mohd Jidin asked for the number of army recruits in the last two years and the breakdown of the numbers by ethnicity.

He also asked for the reasons behind the small number of a certain race in the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF).

According to Zahid, in the last two years 9,054 officers and those of other ranks were taken into the MAF compared to 14,749 officers and personnel of other ranks who were hired from 2006 to 2008.

From 2008 to 2009, 8,151 or 90 percent of those recruited were Malays, 26 or 0.29 percent were Chinese and 82 or 0.91 percent were Indians, while 795 or 8.8 percent were 'others' including Sabah and Sarawak bumiputeras.

"The ministry finds that the participation of non-Malays especially among the Chinese and Indians is still below par," Zahid said.

Besides the lack of "patriotic spirit", Zahid also pointed out other reasons that could have resulted in the poor participation of other races in the MAF.

"Maybe it is the fear of tough military discipline, low pay compared to private jobs or no encouragement from families," he said.

It could also be the result of "lack of backing from their ethnic communities" or "the negative aspersions cast on the MAF".

Minister a coward, says Kulasegaran

Nevertheless Zahid said the government has never set a quota for admission into the MAF and that entrance is based on qualifications and interest, and must be done voluntarily.

NONESeeing red over Zahid's comment, M Kulasegaran (DAP-Ipoh Barat) raised an objection under Standing Order 36(10)(c).

Kulasegaran (left) demanded that the minister apologise for the statement that non-Malays lack patriotism.

As Zahid had already left the House by then, Kulasegaran branded him a "coward", given that the minister had been asked to remain in the House.

Speaker Pandikar Amin Mulia did not order Zahid to withdraw his remarks but instead reprimanded Kulasegaran for his use of the unparliamentary word "coward".

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