

Zahid denies questioning of integrity, loyalty of non-Malays
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KUALA LUMPUR - Defence Minister Dr Zahid Hamidi on Wednesday refuted claims by certain groups that he was insensitive and had questioned the loyalty and integrity of the non-Malays when replying to a question in Parliament Tuesday.

In his media statement to clarify the matter on Wednesday, Zahid pointed out that he had never made such statements nor intended to do so.

"What I had said was that it was possible that it could be due to several factors, including the sense of patriotism that is not strong enough.

"There was also a possibility that it was because of the fear of the strict discipline in the Malaysian Armed Forces (ATM), less attractive pay compared to the offer from the private sector, lack of encouragement from family members, and that there was less encouragement to join the ATM among the ethnic community because of the various negative prejudices," he said.

Zahid was commenting on the statement by MCA president Dr Chua Soi Lek and the DAP MP for Ipoh Barat, M.Kulasegaran who were reported in several newspapers Wednesday as claiming that the Defence Minister was insensitive for issuing such a statement.

Dr Chua, who was commenting on the matter, said Zahid's statement could impede efforts to strengthen racial solidarity.

The MCA president also stressed that Cabinet ministers from Umno should be more sensitive when speaking whether in Parliament or elsewhere and there was no necessity to offend the other communities.

M.Kulasegaran meanwhile described the factor 'weak sense of patriotism' which was attributed as among the factors why the non-Malays did not join the ATM as 'unacceptable and baseless' because this gave the impression that the non-Malays were disloyal.

When replying to a question from Mohd Jidin Shafee (BN-Setiu) during the 'question and answer' session in the Dewan Rakyat Wednesday, Zahid had said that there were only 903 non-Malays in the Malaysian Armed Forces who had joined the service within the last two years.

He said they comprised 82 Indians, 26 Chinese, while the remaining 795 were from other ethnic groups from Sabah and Sarawak. - Bernama

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