

**Don't Oppose Article 17 Of Veterans Bill 2011, Zahid Reminds Ex-Servicemen
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 9 (Bernama) -- Defence Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi today reminded retired and ex-servicemen not to oppose Article 17 of the Veterans Bill 2011 which had been approved by Parliament, for their own personal interest.

He said some of them had rejected the provision in the bill for fear that their freedom to speak out and form associations would be curtailed.

"I know, there are one or two groups and leaders who fear that their position and rights will be under threat if Article 17 is implemented," he said after opening the Mesra Riang Rihuh Carnival and Juara Rakyat Programme at Sekolah Kebangsaan Bandar Puchong 2, near here, today.

He said this in response to calls made by a number of leaders of ex-servicemen's associations for the Defence Ministry to study again Article 17 of the bill which they claimed would result in the dissolution of the existing associations.

Ahmad Zahid said Article 17 would not cancel out these associations but instead, the power to register them would be transferred from the Registrar of Societies to the Registrar of Ex-Servicemen's Associations.

The Veterans Bill 2011 seeks, among others, the establishment of the Malaysian Veterans Council to supervise implementation of policies and action plans pertaining to the armed forces veterans' affairs, besides being a monitoring body for all the veterans' associations.

Asked to comment on the 2012 Budget, Ahmad Zahid said RM500 million out of the allocation for the Defence Ministry would go to building quarters for members of the armed forces and another RM50 million to providing training for the non-pensionable retirees, who now numbered about 130,000.

He said the ministry received an allocation of RM13.76 billion in the budget, the fourth highest among the ministries.

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