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KUALA SELANGOR, DEC. 4 (BERNAMA) -- THE GOVERNMENT MAY HAVE TO DRAFT LAWS TO CHECK MUSLIMS FROM CALLING ONE ANOTHER +KAFIR+ (INFIDEL) AND CAUSING A RIFT IN THE COMMUNITY, DATUK SERIDR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY.

SPEAKING TO REPORTERS DURING 4 VISIT TO KAMPUNG PARIT BAHANG HERE, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD NOT MADE ANY DECISION YET ON THE FORM THE LAWS SHOULD TAKE.

HE SAID THAT IF THE LAWS WERE IMPLEMENTED, ACTION WOULD BE TAKEN AGAINST THOSE INVOLVED IN SUCH ACTIVITIES, WHETHER THEY WERE FROM PAS OR UMNO.

ON THE RULING BY THE CONFERENCE OF RULERS THAT IT IS +HARAM+ (PROHIBITED IN ISLAM) FOR MUSLIMS TO CALL OTHER MUSLIMS +KAFIR+, HE SAID IT HAS THE PREROGATIVE OF THE RULERS TO ISSUE THE RULING.

+THE ADMINISTRATION OF RELIGION IS THE PREROGATIVE OF THE RULERS AND THE GOVERNMENT HAS NO RIGHT TO MAKE ANY DECISION ON QUESTIONS INVOLVING RELIGION,+ HE ADDED.

HE SAID THAT RECENTLY THERE WERE MOVES TO SETTLE THE +MENGKAFIR+ ISSUE THROUGH A PUBLIC DEBATE BUT THE YANG DI-PERTUAN AGONG AND THE RULERS HAD DIRECTED THAT IT BE CALLED OFF AS THE ISSUE WAS NOT A POLITICAL QUESTION.

+AS HEAD OF THE GOVERNMENT AND UMNO PRESIDENT, I RESPECT AND ABIDE BY THE DECISION OF THE CONFERENCE OF RULERS,+ HE SAID.

HOWEVER, HE SAID, THE ISSUE HAD NOT BEEN RESOLVED AND THE SITUATION HAD NOT IMPROVED.

HE SAID HE WOULD ONLY FEEL TRUE RELIEF IF THERE WAS TOTAL LACK OF THE NECESSITY TO HAVE SUCH LAWS BECAUSE THERE WAS NO MISUSE OF RELIGION AND NO DISUNITY AMONG MUSLIMS.

+THE MUSLIMS THEMSELVES WILL FEEL SHAME IF THE SITUATION HAS COME TO THE STAGE WHERE LAWS ARE NEEDED TO PREVENT 'MENCKAFIR' ACTIVITIES AMONG THEM,+ HE ADDED.

ASKED WHETHER IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO HOLD RALLIES TO EXPLAIN TO THE PEOPLE THE LAWS THAT MIGHT BE DRAWN UP, HE SAID THIS WAS NOT NECESSARY.

THIS WAS BECAUSE IGNORANCE OF THE LAW COULD NOT BE ACCEPTED AS AN EXCUSE FOR COMMITTING THE OFFENCE, HE ADDED: -- BERNAMA

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