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PAS-Churches

GOVT CONCERNED OVER PAS' CLAIMS OF SUPPORT BY CHURCHES

KUALA LUMPUR, June 21 (Bernama) -- The government is concerned over claims by PAS that churches in the country are in support of the implementation of the Hudud (Islamic Penal Code), Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman said today.

He said the government felt that this could create religious misunderstanding and lead to bigger problems that would be difficult to overcome.

The Malaysian Council of Churches wrote to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad last week to deny a report in PAS' official organ "Harakah" that churches are in support of PAS' move to implement the Hudud, he told reporters after presenting video tapes on Islam to Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at Wisma Putra here.

The report in the April 26 issue of the "Harakah" quoted the pastor of the St Martin's Church in Kota Baharu, Rev Jacob George John, as saying that churches in the country did not foresee any problem in the acceptance of the Hudud except for those who do not have a deep understanding of the religion.

He was also reported to have said that the Hudud would serve the best interest of everyone including non-Muslims.

Dr Abdul Hamid said that the report came as a shock to the churches and raised a major issue among Christians and their leaders.

"When the report was published, Dr Mahathir inquired from the churches as to the truth of the statement. The churches were very surprised and besides denying the statement, stated that it is not their business to interfere in matters involving other religions.

"The Council of Churches disassociated itself and Dr Mahathir has requested me to inform the media to convey to the public that the statement is not true," he said.

Dr Abdul Hamid called on PAS not to involve other religions in matters relating to Islam.

On the Syariah Advisory Council to be set up to monitor the development of Islamic securities and capital market instrument agencies in the country, he said that Pusat Islam would identify local and foreign experts to sit on the council.

The setting up of the council was announced by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in Sarawak on Wednesday. -- BERNAMA

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