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Mahathir-Syariah

PM TICKS OFF SYARIAH COURT JUDGES FOR DELAYING JUDGEMENT

KUALA LUMPUR, 13 April (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today criticised the attitude of some Syariah Court judges who delayed judgements on cases of wife abuse or divorce because their interpretation on the husband's rights over his wife differed from those held by others.

The Prime Minister said there were court judges who purposely refused to allow petitions for divorce just because the husband had the rights over his wife and as such he could do anything although the wife complained that she had been badly beaten by the husband.

"I have received complaint from a woman who claimed she had been beaten repeatedly by her husband but a Syariah Court Judge said it was the husband's right to beat the wife," he said at a dialogue after launching the Jayawaris Programme organised by the National Civics Bureau of the Prime Minister's Department at the Islamic Centre, here.

A woman had earlier claimed that the Syariah Court purposely delayed petitions for divorce made by a woman on grounds that efforts should be taken to save the marriage although the husband concerned was free to have an affair with his lover without paying for the upkeep of the wife and children for four years.

The Prime Minister, who answered all eight questions directed to him during the dialogue, acknowledged the problem of delays by the Syariah Courts in settling cases of wife abuse and divorce in the country.

Dr Mahathir said the notion that the husband had rights over the wife must be interpreted together with other verses on fairness in the Quran.

"Does the husband's right to hit the wife mean that he can beat her excessively? Is this fair?" he asked.

He said such interpretation was not the fault of Islamic teachings but it arose because the person who made the interpretation was narrow minded.

Questioned by reporters after the dialogue, he said it was time that Syariah Court Judges and officials in the country be given training so that their decisions were not influenced by their views on certain matters but were based on wider interpretation.

He said it was difficult for the federal government to ensure that Syariah Courts speeded up judgement procedures as they were under the jurisdiction of the state governments.

"There are times even I myself feel embarrassed when people of other faiths posed the question of non-uniformity in the implementation of Syariah laws in the country when there is only one Islamic religion," he said. -- BERNAMA

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