

29/07/1997

Anwar: Enforce Syariah laws wisely

Sarban Singh

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Reiterating the Government's moderate approach towards Islam, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim today said the respective religious State Affairs Departments should not be overzealous when enforcing Syariah laws as this could instil fear in the minds of the people.

He said the enforcement of such laws should be done wisely, particularly in cases involving youths.

"We must be moderate. We have many other priorities to be looked into which will later help us towards fully implementing Syariah legislation," he said.

Anwar said this when opening Sekolah Kebangsaan Puchong Jaya and launching its homepage.

Also present were his wife Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Abu Hassan Omar, Deputy Education Minister Datuk Khalid Yunus, Serdang MP Datuk Yap Pian Hon and senior Selangor State officials.

"We support the department when it raids vice dens, gambling centres or other places where unhealthy activities are carried out.

"But they should treat cases involving youths wisely as they (youths) need guidance and love.

"Although we know the department will only take action against them (youths) if they do something wrong, we should exercise due wisdom to correct them," he said.

Anwar said even Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had recently said that officials should exercise moderation.

"It's not the intention of the Prime Minister or myself to belittle matters related to Syariah laws. We too do not want our children to be confused or lose their faith or be misled.

"But let us exercise some wisdom when it comes to youths," he said.

Anwar said prominent Muslim ulama Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradhawi had also said that socio-economic issues needed to be addressed before one could seek to implement Syariah law.

"Sheikh Yusuf said we have to ensure the security of our people and the country and ensure that they live in harmony.

"Then we have to look into their other needs such as education and health facilities. We must ensure they have proper housing and other basic amenities," Anwar said.

He added the people must do away with the perception that youths would lose their moral values if they were to attend a show or other forms of entertainment.

"Even we, during our time, watched the late P. Ramlee's (Tan Sri) movies and listened to pop music and yet nothing went wrong with us," he said.

Anwar said even Caliph Umar Abdul Aziz, who was one of the four caliphs to succeed Prophet Muhammad, did not fully implement Syariah law eventhough the Islamic empire was expanding.

"When asked by his son Abdul Malek, Umar said he would not rush into doing things. Umar said he had to look into other priorities as well such as the safety of the people and that people of other faiths could live in harmony," he said.

Earlier, Anwar also reminded parents not to leave the responsibility of shaping their children's characters solely on teachers or headmasters.

Anwar also received donations amounting to RM60,000 from various organisations for the school's resource centre.

The donors were IOI Group executive chairman Tan Sri Lee Shin Cheng (RM30,000), SP Setia Sdn Bhd executive chairman Voon Tin Yow (RM10,000), Chua Keng Hoong from Sykt Ikhtihan Sdn Bhd (RM10,000), Hasnan Abdul Wahid from Yayasan Pendidikan Serdang (RM5,000) and Abdul Aziz Mohd Shariff from Sykt Jayaman Sdn Bhd (RM5,000).

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