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Beauty contest case: MB to meet Dr M if necessary

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SHAH ALAM, Sun. - Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Abu Hassan Omar today said he would meet Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad if need be to explain to him the action by the Selangor Islamic Religious Department against the three part-time models recently charged in the Syariah High Court.

"Court action has already been taken against the models and there is nothing much we can do about it now. What we can do is only to create awareness among the Muslims of existing State syariah laws."

He said he had already directed the department to create awareness among Muslims on the existing syariah laws and the implications if they violated them rather than going for detention and court action.

"I have already stressed that preventive measures are more important than enforcement as sometimes action taken can cause panic or uproar."

This is what happened in the recent case of three part-time models who were charged in the Syariah High Court for going against a fatwa (Islamic ruling) of the Selangor Mufti, prohibiting Muslim women from taking part in beauty contests. The case will be heard on Aug 6.

Earlier, the three were fined RM400 each in the Petaling Jaya syariah court for indecent behaviour by wearing clothes that revealed the aurat.

Abu Hassan was asked to comment on Dr Mahathir's statement in Mingguan Malaysia today in which he was quoted as saying he too did not agree with the way Jais took action against the three women.

Dr Mahathir said the way it was done would leave a bad image forever on the affected parties, including their families.

Beauty contests became a hot issue in Selangor when the models, Noni Mohamad, 19, of Georgetown, Fahyu Hanim Ahmad, 18, and Sharina Shaari, 22, both of Alor Star, were charged with taking part in the Miss Malaysia Petite 1997 pageant at Holiday Villa Subang, Subang Jaya, about 11pm on June 13.

Asked to comment on the proposed Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill 1997, Abu Hassan who is also the State Umno chairman, said the State Government and Umno welcomed it.

He said even though there was a need for a more deterrent sentence to prevent corruption among the people, especially leaders, there was a need also for accused persons to prove that their wealth was legally acquired.

At present, the onus is on the prosecution to prove that an accused is guilty. The amendment will shift this onus onto the accused.

The Bill will be tabled in Parliament next week.

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