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Mahathir-Islam

MAHATHIR: FED GOVT TO CONTACT RULERS ON ISLAMIC LAWS

KUALA LUMPUR, July 22 (Bernama) -- The federal government will communicate with the Malay rulers, who have powers over religious matters in their states, on standardising Islamic laws in the country, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The matter required attention as several countries, including Islamic nations, look upon Malaysia as a model Islamic state, he said.

"While the world regards Malaysia as a model Islamic nation, it seems that Malaysians themselves want to make other countries their model," he said at a news conference upon arrival at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang near here from two months' "working holiday" abroad.

Dr Mahathir was asked to elaborate on the federal government's next move following his statement three days ago that it had difficulty in bringing about uniformity in enforcement of Islamic laws as powers over religious matters lie with the Malay rulers.

He said Malaysia is regarded as a model Islamic state because of the administration of Islamic laws.

"...the way is not to arrest people, handcuff them to show we have power. This is not the way to reinforce convictions of Islam," he said without being specific.

A news report this week said Dr Mahathir was depressed over non-uniformity of Islamic laws between states whereas there is only one and the same Islam irrespective of where it is followed.

The prime minister said those empowered to administer Islamic laws should be mindful that such power was not meant to be mocked.

The same news report said Dr Mahathir disagreed with the way the Selangor Islamic Affairs Department detained and prosecuted three Muslim women for taking part in a beauty contest recently.

"We can advise people, we can take action in a more effective way," he said.

"May I ask why is that in Malaysia, more Muslims than non-Muslims are involved in bad deeds. In my opinion the reason is that Islamic teachings are not handed down in the way as required by Islam," he said.

On new ideas which he picked up during vacation abroad that he might put forward upon resuming work tomorrow, Dr Mahathir said it would depend on discussions with his Cabinet members.

It would also depend on whether the parties concerned were receptive to the ideas especially those related to agriculture and small- and medium-scale businesses.

Dr Mahathir said among the changes applicable were those related to farming methods in the country which, he said, were still labour-intensive despite Malaysia facing a labour shortage.

He said while holidaying in the English country-side, he observed that large areas of farmland were efficiently managed by just a small group of workers.

What impressed him in Japan was the country's non-dependence on foreign workers despite her large and heavily industrialised economy.

He said the Japanese themselves worked in hotels and shops and were able to increase productivity tailored to their needs.

Malaysia, on the contrary, had to engage foreign workers causing massive outflow of foreign exchange, Dr Mahathir added. -- Bernama

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