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Mahathir-Mufti

MAHATHIR:GOVT TO MEET MUFTIS MORE OFTEN

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 6 (Bernama) -- The government has agreed to meet ulamas more often to enlighten them regularly on its projects and policies, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

This was agreed upon during his meeting last Tuesday with muftis nation-wide, he told reporters at the end of the second day of the Umno general assembly.

The assembly ends tomorrow.

"What's important here is who do we regard as ulamas. If we're taking about muftis, yes we'll meet the muftis," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, was asked to comment on a proposal by a Kelantan delegate to the assembly, Mohd Alwi Che Ahmad that the government hold regular meetings with ulamas like the prime minister's regular sessions with corporate figures.

Mohd Alwi, when debating an assembly motion on Islam today, had also suggested that muftis be included in investment missions and official visits abroad.

On Mohd Alwi's second suggestion, Dr Mahathir said the government would also consider bringing along muftis on overseas investment missions and visits.

"We can take them along, organise trips but what we've agreed to is to have more meetings with ulamas," he said.

However, Dr Mahathir said, he would like to know, who else in the country, besides the muftis, that the society has regarded as ulamas because at the moment there were already too many people who called themselves ulamas.

"Actually in a Muslim society, ulamas are recognised as learned persons. They don't self claim to be ulamas or be certified so. We don't issue ulama certificates," he said.

He said the government would recognise a person as an ulama if society itself gave that recognition as accorded Imam Shafie, Imam Bukhari and others.

Meanwhile, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman said the proposal to streamline issuance of fatwa (rulings) through the National Fatwa Council was to enable all state muftis to jointly discuss any issue that surfaced in a particular state.

At the moment it was impractical to enforce a fatwa issued by a particular state in another because Muslims are bound by the inter-state geographical borders, he told reporters when approached on the matter.

Abdul Hamid said the proposed fatwa standardisation exercise was not meant as an imposition on the muftis.

Rather, he said, it was to ensure streamlining of fatwa through a proper channel, the National Fatwa Council.

Abdul Hamid said at their meeting with Dr Mahathir last Tuesday, the muftis were all for streamlining of all fatwa.-- BERNAMA

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