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Rapists, wife-beaters and addicts the target

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Fathers who rape their children and others, husbands who beat their wives, and dadah addicts will be the target of future action by all State Islamic Religious Affairs Departments.

This would be the departments' priority rather than focusing on the way people dressed, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

This was the focus agreed upon when Dr Mahathir held a meeting with Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers on Thursday night.

"I met the MBs to report on my meeting with the Rulers," he said.

"Naturally, the MBs have their role to play and we discussed the problem (on the need for uniform Syariah laws).

"The MBs are supportive. They see the problem.

"They would like to ensure that the focus is on people who rape their children, rape other people, beat their wives and take drugs rather than focusing on people's dresses."

The Prime Minister was speaking to reporters after visiting the Malaysia International Exhibitions and Showroom at the Mines Resort City.

On Thursday, Dr Mahathir said the Rulers' Conference agreed that there should be uniform implementation of Syariah laws in all States but only after a study had been conducted by a committee under the Prime Minister's Department.

The Sultan of Perak will be the adviser to the committee.

Syariah laws have for decades been implemented differently in various States, with the penalties imposed on offenders varying from State to State.

Dr Mahathir said the meeting also touched on Friday prayer sermons which were used by some groups for politicking and to belittle others.

"This is not a sermon any more, this is a political campaign," he said, "and it does not correspond to the teachings of Islam."

Asked on the problems which resulted in non-uniform Syariah laws among the State Islamic Religious Affairs Departments, Dr Mahathir said certain quarters were using the Rulers as an excuse.

"Certain religious officers are hiding behind the Rulers," he said, "and say that this is a matter for the Rulers and has nothing to do with the State's administration.

"Even in the religious affairs department, there are officers who say that the department has nothing to do with the administration."

At least three Menteri Besar - Selangor, Kedah and Negri Sembilan - hold the portfolio for religion in their respective States while in other States, it is held by senior Exco members.

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