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Courts-Restructure

RESTRUCTURING OF SYARIAH COURTS WITHIN TWO MONTHS

SIK, March 28 (Bernama) -- The restructuring of the syariah courts and its alignment with the state Religions Affairs Departments, an exercise that was put off last January, is to be completed by mid-year, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman said today.

He said the various state governments were now being briefed on the matter, to avoid confusion.

"The state will have to be prepared (for the restructuring), as its understanding will take time, but I am confident all will be settled within two months," he told reporters after inspecting the construction work on Malaysia's first open concept mosque at Kampung Kota Aur, here.

The RM1.2 million mosque, donated by Maju Holdings Sdn Bhd, probably the first open air mosque in the world, can accommodate 1,200 worshippers.

Earlier, Abdul Hamid officiated at an Armed Forces Medical Corps community project at Belantik, near here.

Abdul Hamid said the syariah courts restructuring was delayed because certain state governments had to obtain the approval at the various levels of authority, like the state executive councils.

He gave an assurance that the restructuring would not affect the powers of the Sultan as head of the religion in their respective states since the existing state laws would still remain in force.

The move would also create closer cooperation between the state and the central government in the supervision of the syariah courts and its staff.

"We at the centre will look at all appointments...promotion, salaries and other service matters," he added.

Last July, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced the restructuring of the syariah courts nation-wide, and the services relating to religious affairs would also be standardised.

Following this, a Syariah Judiciary Department was to be set up under a Syariah Chief Justice of Malaysia, under the jurisdiction of the Prime Minister's Department.

The restructuring would enable syariah judges to be on par with the civil court judges.

Following his visit to the mosque, Hamid said Pusat Islam would propose that all future mosques should be built on the "open" concept approach, which he said would also be faster and cheaper to put up. -- BERNAMA

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