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Social ills: `Most number of cases are in Kelantan'

Saiful Azhar Abdullah; Zubaidah Abu Bakar

ALOR STAR, Thurs. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight that Kelantan, under Pas rule, has the highest number of cases of social ills in the country.

He said although Kelantan was nicknamed, Serambi Mekah ("Corridor of Mecca"), the State was beset with social problems like AIDS and HIV.

Although Kedah and Perlis were neighbours of Thailand, their number of AIDS and HIV cases were comparatively smaller, he said, adding that he had to reveal the truth about the social ills in Kelantan.

"Actually, we purposely did not want to reveal statistics about the social ills because we did not want to embarrass anyone."

But Dr Mahathir said he had to expose the problem in the State after its Menteri Besar, Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, claimed that only his State Government knew how to tackle the problem while others were at a loss on how to handle the situation.

Referring to Nik Aziz's claim that he was not invited to attend a meeting to discuss the problems affecting youths at Pusat Islam, Kuala Lumpur, on Wednesday, the Prime Minister said the meeting was also attended by State Executive Councillors and religious officers.

"The meeting was not only attended by Menteris Besar. Even Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid (Kedah Menteri Besar) was not present.

"It was just a coincidence that we didn't invite Nik Aziz. We heard that he felt dejected at not being invited to give his views on how to tackle the problem and we apologise for that."

But the Prime Minister said he found Nik Aziz "arrogant" when he claimed Kelantan had done well in curbing the social ills whereas the records show that the State had the highest cases of social ills.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at Masjid Kepala Batas, 14km from here, after breaking fast with the residents of Kepala Batas.

Also present were his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah, Sanusi, Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim, Jitra Assemblyman Tan Sri Osman Aroff and members of the China Islamic Association, on a three-day visit to Kedah.

Elaborating on the social ills besetting the youths, Dr Mahathir said it was shocking to see that 66 per cent of those involved in unhealthy activities were Malays.

Dr Mahathir said at the meeting at Pusat Islam, several causes of the social problems were discussed. Some blamed the lack of guidance from parents while others blamed the education system and economic progress. "But we should realise that not only the Malays are exposed to such elements."

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