

06 FEB 1997

Mahathir-Social

SOCIAL PROBLEMS MORE APPARENT IN KELANTAN

ALOR SETAR, Feb 6 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight that social problems are more apparent in Kelantan compared to the other states.

The Prime Minister said studies carried out showed that the problems, including HIV, AIDS and drug abuse, occurred more in Kelantan than in any other states although Kedah and Perlis also had a common border with Thailand.

Dr Mahathir said he was exposing the problem with reluctance at the special meeting with religious authorities in Kuala Lumpur yesterday as he did not want to offend anyone when Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat claimed that the problem was not serious in Kelantan as the state had its own way of tackling the issue.

"Do not go around bragging that we can do it while others cannot," he said at a breaking of the fast with the people at Kepala Batas Mosque, near here.

Nik Aziz was reported to have said that he was not invited to the special meeting to discuss social problems among the youths.

He was also reported to have suggested that the federal government emulate the Kelantan government in tackling the social problems among youths.

The Prime Minister said Nik Aziz claimed that the problem could be solved in Kelantan but statistics showed that the problem was worse in Kelantan compared to the other states.

He also clarified that not all Menteri Besar attended the meeting, including Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid.

He said the meeting was attended by Exco members and officers related to religious affairs in their respective states.

Dr Mahathir said the meeting was carried out in haste as the government felt that the social problems had reached serious proportion and needed to be tackled firmly and effectively.

He reiterated his call on the people, particularly Muslims, to find out the reasons why such social problems involved more Muslim youths compared to the other races.

If development, progress and prosperity were the source of the problem, why were the other communities, who were also exposed to the same environment, not as badly affected by the problem, he asked.

The Prime Minister said it was important that every Muslim held to religious values and strong will power to prevent them from becoming prey to such problems.

Dr Mahathir said while the religious education system continued with the teaching of "fardu ain" and religious obligation, emphasis should also be given to explain the adverse effects of unhealthy activities from the religious aspects. -- BERNAMA

MFJ AO