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Mahathir-Social

STUDY SOCIAL PROBLEM IN DEPTH AND COORDINATE ACTION

KUALA LUMPUR, March 11 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today urged Barisan Nasional (BN) leaders to study the social problems in depth and take coordinated action with the consent of all groups.

This would help check reservations about the action being taken from certain groups, he said when briefing BN leaders on the social problems and the Multimedia Super Corridor at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

He said they should adopt wise, effective and rational measures to check the social problem which was becoming serious in Malaysian society.

"As BN members, we should realise that we are from the government party and our influence is much bigger than that of other parties and hence we should fully understand this problem."

"Whether we are members of the government or not we still can play a role as leaders but the important thing is that the BN should adopt a common stand," he said.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament and state assemblymen were among the more 1,000 people who attended the briefing.

Dr Mahathir said the BN leaders should also get the views and opinions of academicians and also their cooperation in undertaking studies on the social problem.

By involving academicians directly in efforts to handle the social problem, there would be better analysis of the situation and effective action could be taken to check the various social ills in society.

He admitted that no society in the world was spared the social problem but it was incumbent upon all groups to acknowledge the existence of the problem seriously.

The Prime Minister wanted the BN leaders and members to realise that the social problems arose not merely because of foreign influence but also due to weaknesses in Malaysian society, the authorities and the government.

"To handle the social problem, the BN should debate, discuss and sieve the problem to get to its roots and find solutions."

Dr Mahathir in the course of his nearly three-hour briefing reminded the BN leaders not to take advantage of the existing social problems and advance their own political interests.

On the view that the government should coordinate and stress on Islamic and other religious education in the fight against social ills, the Prime Minister said all religions only taught good things.

However problems arose when there were people who made inaccurate religious interpretations to the extent of politicising religion and blamed others and made false allegations over the social problems that existed.

"The important thing is a comprehensive solution based on universal values and society's culture," he said.

Dr Mahathir said religious education was also a strong wall of defence against undesirable influences and more effective than the enforcement of all types of laws.

However the Prime Minister said it would not suffice if religious education only stressed on questions of worship and penalties and not lay stress on social ills and other undesirable activities in daily life.

The Prime Minister said many people stressed that liquor was haram to Muslims as it was mentioned in the Quran but was it not wrong for Muslims

to be involved in drug addiction and go on to become HIV and AIDS carriers.

"Many talk about liquor being haram to Muslims when in fact narcotics posed a bigger problem particularly to Muslims," he said.

The Prime Minister said religious education should also teach about matters causing social problems such as free sex, bohsia, bohjan, dumping of babies and sex outside marriage.

He said there should be great self-restraint on the part of the individual and the will not to commit undesirable things not just because of the enforcement of the law.

Dr Mahathir said the progress or the backwardness of a society depended on its civilisation and the values it held.

It would be better for society to take stock of the situation, decide on the good values it should have and how to educate their children and not point fingers at others, he said.

"Everyone is at fault including the government for not taking action and not doing the things which should have been done to counter the social menace," Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister agreed that society give its earnest attention and adopt a firm stand on the question of discipline among children.

On the media giving prominence to the social problem among youth, the Prime Minister said this was healthy as it showed there was already an awareness and a firm desire among everyone to give serious attention to this problem.

This widespread discussion on the social problem was a success but everyone should pool their resources and work in unison to resolve the social problem, the Prime Minister added.

He also said proposals on overcoming the social ills particularly that from state governments should be coordinated and forwarded to the Federal Government so that reservations on particular actions and measures could be avoided. -- BERNAMA

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