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Abdullah-Nik Aziz

"BAN UMNO" STATEMENT SHOWS NIK AZIZ IS INTOLERANT - DPM

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 21 (Bernama) -- Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat's statement that Umno and Barisan Nasional will be declared illegal for Muslims if he becomes the state's mufti shows his intolerance, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

"They (PAS) want to ban, close down everything. They want to close down newspapers, close down TV, and declare parties illegal," the deputy prime minister told reporters after opening a seminar on the rights of Muslims in countries with a non-Muslim majority.

Nik Aziz, who is head of the PAS Council of Ulama, is reported to have said in Kuching yesterday that that first thing he would do if Umno appointed him as the Kelantan mufti would be to declare Umno and the BN illegal for Muslims.

Kelantan Umno chief Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah had previously said that the state Umno would not put up a candidate against Nik Aziz in the coming general election if he accepted the mufti's post.

Abdullah said the BN government was more tolerant than PAS because it had not acted on calls for action against PAS, including prohibiting the party from using the word "Islam" in its name.

On the view expressed by some people that the government had not fully implemented Islamic principles, Abdullah said he agreed that much needed to be done to fulfil the demands of the religion.

He said neither he nor Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir had claimed that Islamic principles had been fully implemented in the country.

Efforts to develop the country, race and Muslim community took time but the government was slowly showing some success, he said.

Abdullah said Islam itself took time to develop under the caliphs and it was the same with modern Islam.

However, it was not right at all to say that the government had not done anything for Islam.

"Those who say we didn't do anything have eyes that don't see, hearts that are not open, and brains that don't think. This statement may be harsh but that's the fact," he said.

On claims that the the government took a soft approach in implementing Islamic principles, Abdullah said the country would not have achieved much had it not adopted that approach.

"Hard approach (will cause) frictions all the time ... the non-forceful way is good at all times," he said.

On reports that non-Muslim supporters of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim too had gone to the National Mosque to express their opposition to the government, Abdullah said they should not do anything that was sensitive and cause anger among followers of a particular religion.

"The mosque is a place to pray, not a place for non-Muslims to seek support or hear people speak.

"We don't stop non-Muslims from going to the mosque or visit the mosque...but it's not a place to make calls that can lead to hatred," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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