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PM: Law created to suit Pas' interests

KUCHING, Mon. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Hudud Bill passed by the Terengganu Assembly today was a law created by Pas to suit its political interests.

The Prime Minister said the fact that the Terengganu Government amended its earlier proposal showed it was not the real hudud.

Despite claiming that they (Pas Government) were enforcing the law of God, Dr Mahathir said the Opposition had to amend it after strong public protest.

"They amended it because they fear losing non-Muslim support," he said at the opening of a nine-storey complex for Lembaga Amanah Kebajikan Masjid Negeri Sarawak.

"If they (Terengganu and Kelantan Governments) are genuine in their quest to enforce God's law, there should not be any disparity in the laws."

The Bill, which was tabled in the Terengganu State Assembly yesterday, was passed today.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had always been recognised as a Muslim country that had practised tolerance towards other religions.

Speaking in Penang before the Bill was passed, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Pas' insistence on tabling the Bill despite strong opposition showed that it merely wanted to gain political support.

"Pas does not care if it could achieve the justice that is expected of the syariah laws.

"The Pas Government is not interested whether the laws could be implemented properly and it has never considered all this."

In Kuala Lumpur, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Rais Yatim said it was up to the people to understand the implications of hudud.

"On our part, we do not want to be seen as political when opposing the implementation of hudud and qisas.

"Let the people decide if they want to support such a law," he said.

Bar Council chairman Mah Weng Kwai said he could not give his opinion immediately.

"The subject of hudud cannot be taken lightly. I cannot comment as it is a crucial issue which has to be discussed first," he said.

MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said the Bill on hudud and qisas which was passed was not suitable for Malaysia.

"These are laws by groups of people who feel they have gained power of a particular State in the country," he said.

"Malaysians by now should understand the real motives of the Pas Government.

"The non-Malays especially, must be wary of Pas, if they still want to enjoy the freedom they have been getting from Barisan Nasional."

MCA vice-president Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn said the party would mobilise its members to express the Chinese community's outrage at the law.

"MCA will hold roadshows nationwide and explain to the people about the so-called hudud which discriminates against women," said Fong who is Kelantan MCA chairman.

The law, he said, was not compatible with the prevailing situation in the country.

Gerakan deputy president Datuk Kerk Choo Ting said the tabling of the Bill in Terengganu was politically-motivated.

Kerk, who is Deputy International Trade and Industry Minister, said the law was against the Federal Constitution and implementing it would not be a good move in Malaysia's multi-racial society.

DAP deputy national chairman Karpal Singh said the passing of the Syariah Criminal Offences Terengganu Enactment was a futile exercise meant to prove a political point.

"They want to make a point that they can get the Enactment passed, but when it cannot be implemented they will say this is because of the Federal Government."

Karpal said the Enactment would be aborted as it was not within the competency of the State Government's powers to pass such an Enactment.

He added that former Lord President and Solicitor-General Tun Salleh Abbas and the State legal adviser should have stopped the Enactment in the first place as they would know the Enactment could not be implemented.

DAP secretary-general Kerk Kim Hock said the tabling of the Bill yesterday reinforced the perception that Pas, when compared to BN, was the "greater evil".

Kerk, who is Kota Melaka MP, said the Pas move would only increase BN's political support and affect the Opposition's struggle to strive for democracy and human rights.

"It will only pave the way for BN's victory in the next general election."