

14 APR 2002
Mahathir-Incest
PM AGREES ON HEAVIER PENALTY FOR INCEST

BANGI, April 14 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today agreed that heavier penalties should be imposed on offenders who had committed incest in view of the increasing number of such cases reported in Malaysia lately.

The Prime Minister said the community should feel ashamed by the involvement of some individuals, especially the Malays who are Muslims, in such despicable acts.

"I agree on a heavier penalty, (including) displaying them in front of the public and caning (them)," he said when closing a women's course organised by Puteri Umno, here.

However, Dr Mahathir said what was more important was that the community must be taught from a young age to inculcate good values such as the feeling of shame in indulging in such abhorrent acts.

The nation was shocked by a report concerning the rape of a girl, who is now 12 years old, by five men including her own father, grandfather and brother since 1994 who had been charged in court for the offence.

At the function, Puteri Umno handed a memorandum to the Prime Minister stating the movement's opposition to incestuous acts and sexual crimes against women and children.

Dr Mahathir also said the lack of conscience could have prompted two of the three men accused of cheating the Pilgrims Fund Board (Tabung Haji) to laugh as shown in the picture published in newspapers Saturday although they were handcuffed after being charged in court in Seremban.

The other accused was seen covering his face with the shirt he was wearing.

Dr Mahathir said the Malays appeared to be unable to suppress their desire to commit such acts which were condemned in terms of the law and religion.

"If we can inculcate the feeling of shame and other noble values, it can reduce cases concerning incest and drug abuse," he said.

He also said that religious education did not seem to stress on the good and bad things arising from certain acts and, on the other hand, only focused on matters concerning life after death.

The memorandum was among those supporting the proposal by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi for a heavier penalty including increasing the number of canings on incest offenders.

Besides calling for the review of Section 376 of the Penal Code and stiffer penalty for sexual crimes, Puteri Umno also proposed that sex-related offenders be given comprehensive treatment while in prison.

Puteri Umno also urged the government to widen the definition for incest to include children who were legally adopted and those entrusted to them as guardians.

In his speech which touched on, among other things, the importance of the women's role and the young generation in community and national development, Dr Mahathir said women and the younger generation could help in inculcating good values such as diligence, trust, feeling of shame and the ability to suppress desire.

-- BERNAMA
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