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Mahathir-Divorce

DIVORCE VIA SMS IS NOT THE WAY, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

PUTRAJAYA, July 30 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the Cabinet feels that divorce by Muslim couples should not be done via the short messaging service (SMS).

"The Cabinet decided that while it may be correct from other angles, it is not the way to get divorced," he said when commenting on the decision of the Cabinet at its weekly meeting today.

Dr Mahathir was met by reporters after attending a luncheon hosted by Datuk Chan Kong Choy for Cabinet members in conjunction with his recent appointment as Transport Minister, replacing Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik.

The issue was hotly debated following the decision by the East Gombak Syariah lower court on July 24 that a divorce declared via SMS was valid, provided it was verified by the court.

Syariah judge Mohamad Fauzi Ismail ruled that the 18-month marriage between Azida Fazlina Abdul Latif and Shamsudin Latif was annulled when Shamsudin sent Azida Fazlina an SMS stating " Kalau engkau tak keluar dari rumah mak bapak engkau, jatuh talak tiga." (If you do not leave your parents' house, you will be divorced).

In his speech at a function in Cyberjaya yesterday, Dr Mahathir said that state-of-the-art communication technology should not be abused, like using SMS on the handphone to divorce.

Meanwhile, Women and Family Development Minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil said Dr Mahathir had raised the matter at the Cabinet meeting even before she could do it.

"He gave a clear picture that divorce via SMS is not a culture or a way that we would want to use in Malaysia," she said.

Shahrizat said that such an act was not only an insult to women but could also tarnish the image of the Syariah laws besides giving a bad impression of Muslim men in Malaysia.

"Actually, if we look, Muslim men in our country uphold the Muslim spirit. Only a few give Islam a bad name," she said.

Shahrizat said Muslim men were generally caring and had the greatest respect for their spouses and mothers "but because of this one or two cases (of divorce through the SMS), it gives them a bad impression."

She did not want to say who was at fault but added that it was a "question of interpretation."

-- BERNAMA

MAM JK SRI