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Mahathir-Polygamy

STATES ASKED TO GAZETTE ISLAMIC FAMILY LAW IMMEDIATELY

PUTRAJAYA, Jan 14 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today asked the state governments to gazette the Islamic Family Law as soon as possible to resolve the allegations of non-uniformity in Islamic laws including those pertaining to polygamy.

The Prime Minister said the question of uniformity actually did not arise, in fact, this had been resolved as the laws had been accepted by the Rulers' Council.

"Thus, what needs to be done is only to gazette the law, and the same law will be applied in all states in the peninsula as well as Sabah and Sarawak.

"The question of standardising them does not arise when we gazette this law," he told reporters after chairing a special meeting to resolve the controversy pertaining to polygamy and Islamic Family Law, here today.

The controversy over polygamy arose when Perlis was reported to have proposed facilitating men to practise polygamy including relaxing the conditions such as doing away with the requirement to have approval from the first wife.

Dr Mahathir said he found that this was not true and what the Perlis government had meant had been misunderstood by the press.

"The Perlis government did not intend to facilitate polygamy, the Perlis government was merely following the teachings of Islam...polygamy is allowed but not encouraged.

"There is actually no differences of opinion between the Perlis government and the other state governments," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Islamic religious authorities in the states were said to have only received the three volumes of the law concerned three months ago and they needed some time to scrutinise them before handing them to the state government for gazetting.

He also said that the government would discuss with the Thai government and Muslim leaders in southern Thailand to ensure that only those empowered with the necessary rights could solemnise marriages for couples from Malaysia.

"And we will recognise. But if the marriage is performed by those without such rights, we will not recognise the couple's marriage certificate," he said.

Dr Mahathir said polygamy must be practised according to the requirements of Islam by taking into consideration factors such as financial capability, fairness as well as the status of the woman one intended to marry.

"This must be resolved by the authorities. And if the authorities responsible find that the person concerned cannot afford and so on, permission cannot be given," he said.

"This is the stand of all the states, there is no problem," he said.

Responding to a question, the Prime Minister said the government also wanted to ensure divorce cases to be resolved within a certain time frame.

"We want to determine that in divorce cases, a certain time frame is specified. If the husband does not turn up...within a certain time frame, the court will make a decision," he said.

Dr Mahathir hoped that when the Islamic Family Law is eventually gazetted and enforced, problems pertaining to Muslim families would be reduced.

When asked whether he considers the polygamy issue to have been resolved, Dr Mahathir said: "I think it's already resolved. Perlis (government) says it has no intention to make it easier for polygamy but in certain cases it may try."

"It's also the same for the other states, when we have gazetted this law, the conditions (for polygamy) will be the same wherever one goes," he said.

Also present at the meeting this afternoon were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Ministers in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim and Datuk Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin, Religious Adviser to the Prime Minister, Tan Sri Abdul Hamid Othman, Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim, Perlis Mufti Datuk Mat Jahaya Hussin and the representative from the Ministry of Women and Family Development.

-- BERNAMA

MAM AFY AO