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PRIME NEWS

PM: Hudud not rejected by govt

TRUE UNDERSTANDING: Many issues need to be addressed first, says Najib

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ADIE SURI ZULKEFLI
AND JASMINE KAUR
ALOR STAR
news@nst.com.my

THE Federal Government has never rejected hudud, but there are many issues and obstacles that need to be addressed before the Islamic law can be implemented in the country, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

He said the Federal Government supported any effort to implement hudud, but cautioned that it was paramount to ensure that Muslim and non-Muslim communities truly understood the concept of hudud to prevent misunderstandings.

"Before we can implement hudud, it is paramount to make sure that the Muslim community is fully prepared in terms of understanding, physical and mental.

"This also covers the non-Muslim community, as it must be given a true and comprehensive understanding of Islamic law to preserve the sanctity of Islamic teachings," he said before closing the 2014

Malaysia Pondok Ijtimak at Sri Mentaloon here yesterday.

Present were Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom and Malaysia Pondok Development Foundation (MPDF) executive chairman Datuk Dr Mashitah Ibrahim.

Najib said there was a significant difference between rejecting hudud and not being able to implement the Islamic law because of existing obstacles.

"That is why we need *ulama* (Islamic clerics) to conduct an in-depth study on the viability of implementing hudud in the country and to come up with *ijtihad* (consensus) on the matter. We need to make sure that justice, which is the ultimate goal of Islamic law, can be delivered through hudud."

He reassured the 1,300 pondok (religious) school owners, board of trustees and students that his administration was consistent in upholding Islam and keeping firm to the *wassatiyyah* (moderation) concept, which was based on justice, excellence and balance.



Datuk Seri Najib Razak talking with Malaysia Pondok Ijtimak panellists Prof Emeritus Dr Surin Pitsuwan (right) and Datuk Dr Muhammad Afifi Al-Akiti in Alor Star yesterday. Pic by Amran Hamid

"The government is committed to implementing 'Maqasid Syariah' in the administrative system, which champions and preserves religion, life, descendants and properties."

Najib said the government would continue transforming the pondok school institution, in line with the national Islamic Education agenda. He said the effort was part of the government's recognition of the institution's role in upholding Islam and defending the religion from threats like liberalism, secularism, pluralism and other teachings that contradicted true Islamic teachings.

At the event, Najib announced a RM500,000 grant for MPDF to compile and rehabilitate old *kitab* (religious books) and religious ref-

erence materials.

He announced that the government would provide places and scholarships for students and teachers from pondok schools to further their studies at institutions of higher learning in the country.

"The government has provided 100 places for those from pondok schools. Fifty will be for teachers, who will be given places at the Bangi Islamic Education Complex, while the other 50 will be given to students for places in Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia in Nilai."

He also announced that the 1Malaysia Development Board would extend its haj sponsorship to 20 teachers from pondok schools.

Meanwhile, Ustaz Mohammad Kazim Elias said the government's stand that it was not ready to im-

plement hudud for now did not contradict Islamic teachings.

In *Jitra*, Najib said the Rural Transformation Centre (RTC) had helped mitigate the impact of the price hike of essential goods for those living in its vicinity, as the people were able to buy such goods at lower prices.

He said this was proven by the fact that the government had not received any complaints over the price hike from those living near the five RTCs nationwide.

"I am confident that the Kedah RTC in Naph will become an instant hit among the locals, given that it is near the main road and not far from the Universiti Utara Malaysia campus," he said at the opening of the Naph RTC yesterday.