

# MOVE TO ELEVATE SYARIAH COURT STATUS

Govt moots special panel to gather data, set rules on court's jurisdiction and powers, says PM

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**T**HE government will establish a special committee sanctioned by the Conference of Rulers to empower and elevate the status of the Syariah Court, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said the committee would conduct research and hold discussions with mufti and relevant parties to collect views and formulate regulations that could be implemented to enhance the jurisdiction of the Syariah Court.

He said the Conference of Rulers had given its consent for the committee to study ways to enhance the powers of the Syariah Court and ensure that it did not affect non-Muslims.

"Thus far, the names of the special committee's members have received the consent of the Conference of Rulers, and they will need to engage with the State Islamic Religious Councils and state governments before the matter is finalised.

"There are methods that need to be discussed because some states are quite strict and may not agree if we violate the principles



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim speaking during Minister's Question Time at the Dewan Rakyat in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. BERNAMA PIX

mentioned, but whatever proposals this committee may have, the Conference of Rulers must be notified," Anwar said during Minister's Question Time at the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

Anwar was replying to Mohd Azizi Abu Naim (PN-Gua Musang) on the federal government's stance on the Notice of Petition filed by two women to challenge the Kelantan Syariah Criminal Code (I) Enactment

2019 and the government's efforts to safeguard syariah-related laws.

Anwar said any decision by the Federal Court regarding the constitutional challenge proceedings by the two Muslim women would not hinder the government's efforts to strengthen the Syariah Court through the committee.

"That is why we have this special committee to coordinate the

implementation of the law. Imagine if the states are given unlimited space to enact laws, each state does its own thing and then there will be conflicts among the states," he said.

Through the committee, Anwar said, any proposal for amendments and improvements to the Syariah Court would have to obtain the consent of the Conference of Rulers before it was tabled in Parliament.

Anwar reminded politicians not to politicise the issue of the constitutional challenge proceedings.

He said the real issue regarding the petition was whether a state could implement its own laws without consulting the federal government.

Anwar said there was a clear separation of legislative powers, where some jurisdictions fell under the state, federal or were joint jurisdictions.

"This is not a substantive decision about syariah, it is about jurisdiction. Can the state make (laws)? Imagine (if) all states make (their own) laws and each state has contradictions."

Anwar also took aim at the opposition for claiming ignorance on the constitutional challenge to the Kelantan syariah law.

He said the petition was filed on May 25 last year when Perikatan Nasional was part of the government, before the 15th General Election.

"I regret that there are parties trying to divert the issue as if this was done by the unity government now. On May 25 last year, who was the prime minister? Who was the law minister then?"

"When you were the minister, you did not do your work= Then the court allowed (the case to proceed) on Sept 30, 2022.

"Who was the law minister then? Where are the ministers?"

"They didn't know? How can a cabinet minister, in a case of such gravity opposing Islamic syariah, say they don't know?"

"A very easy excuse (to put the blame on the unity government)," he said.