

PM: More time needed for Act 355

Views from international experts sought to strengthen proposed amendment

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PUTRAJAYA: More time is needed for the proposal to amend the Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1965 (Act 355) to be scrutinised, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said the proposed amendment to the Act should not be made hastily to ensure that it would be accepted by all states, and that it should include views from muftis and international experts.

He said the proposal had been presented to the Chairman of the Chair of the National Council of Islamic Religious Affairs (MKI), Sultan Nazrin Shah of Perak.

"Last week, I had an audience with Sultan Nazrin, the new MKI chairman, and he has agreed with the early framework (of the proposed amendment) presented by the panel of experts, which was also delivered to Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Religious Affairs) Datuk Dr Mohd Na'im Mokhtar.

"Sultan Nazrin expressed his readiness for further discussion during the upcoming MKI meeting at the end of August.

"This means there has been progress and I hope, that everyone, including the states, can see this positively," he said during his speech at the Convention to



All smiles: Anwar with Mohd Na'im and Fadhlina at the Convention to Uphold Malaysia's Syariah Judiciary and Legislation in Putrajaya. — Bernama

Uphold Malaysia's Syariah Judiciary and Legislation here yesterday.

Anwar said he had asked the committee overseeing the amendment to get views from international experts, which was also

Sultan Nazrin's recommendation.

"Based on our discussions, Sultan Nazrin said it was recommended for the matter to be referred to international experts before being reverted to the Attorney General's Chambers to

then get approval from the Council of Rulers.

"I call on anyone who has the expertise to engage with us and discuss it. I have asked the committee to refer to international experts as well," said Anwar, add-

ing that the extra step is not purposely done to delay the amendment.

Act 355 aims to enhance the jurisdiction of the Syariah Courts, which also includes the proposal to increase penalties for syariah criminal offences.

At the same event, Anwar also expressed his commitment to expediting the proposed implementation of the Syariah Judges' Remuneration Act to elevate the status of Syariah Courts judges to be on par with that of Civil Courts judges.

He added that there is a need to strike a balance between the Syariah Judicial Service Scheme and the Civil Judicial Service Scheme.

"I was informed about the Syariah Judges' Remuneration Act. Now it is following the PTD (Administrative and Diplomatic Officer) scheme.

"I will ask Mohd Na'im to speed up the adoption of the Syariah Judges' Remuneration Act, so that the status of Syariah Judges can be elevated," Anwar said.

Also present at the convention were Mohd Na'im and Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek.