

After Dr M's Remarks On Religious Freedom, Muslim Groups Say Respect Is Two-Way Street

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By Admin-S

(MMO) – Official policies must consequently be formulated with Islam's position in mind.

Several Muslim groups have concurred with Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad that there is no compulsion in Islam, but reminded him that the religion holds a special position in the country.

The groups also insisted that respect among the country's various faiths must be reciprocal, adding that non-Muslims should also refrain from interfering in Muslim affairs.

Islamist group Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia (Isma) deputy president Aminuddin Yahaya cited the opposition to ongoing attempts in the Parliament to allow Shariah courts to deliver harsher punishments as an example of non-Muslims allegedly meddling in Islamic affairs.

"Muslim cannot interfere in the affairs of other religions; however, it goes both ways. There must be a sense of respect for one another and they too cannot interfere in Islamic affairs," he told *Malay Mail*.

"I wished that Tun Mahathir will look at the bigger context regarding respect among different religions to ensure that there are no double standards. Act 355 will not interfere or affect the lives of non-Muslims yet many want to have a say in the matter," said Aminuddin, who also heads Ummat, a coalition groups supporting the Shariah Bill.

Act 355 refers to the Syariah Court Act (Criminal Jurisdiction) 1965 that PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang is proposing to amend in order to increase sentencing limits by up to tenfold in some instances.

Malaysia Islamic Strategic Research Institute (Iksim) chief executive Datuk Mahamad Naser Disa said that while the former prime minister was likely speaking generally, any political party that governs Malaysia must respect Islam's position as the religion of the federation.

Naser, who heads the government-linked think tank, said official policies must consequently be formulated with Islam's position in mind.

"Those who claim that Islam is merely an official religion of the federation or said that we are a secular country do not understand the sovereignty of Islam in the Constitution," he said.

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