

PM: Kelantan can do it if it's not unconstitutional

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — The Federal Government will not interfere with the Kelantan Government's plans to introduce Islamic laws in the state so long as it is not against the Federal Constitution, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said there were areas where the PAS-led state government could exercise without contravening the Constitution.

"As an example, while the state government cannot revoke lottery licences, it can close down the premises of lottery operators," he said after chairing an Umno supreme council meeting.

"If it does not agree with *riba* (system where interest is charged on loans), it has the power to close or not to license such institutions...also the sale of liquor, the question of *aurat* (covering of the body), football attire for men and (attire) for women, all these are within its jurisdiction," he added.

"*Hukum hudud* (manda-

tory Islamic laws) is not restricted to punishments like chopping off hands or beheading. If it wishes to go to court to determine their areas of powers, we will not stop it," he said.

Dr Mahathir was asked for his views on the Kelantan Government's proposal to amend the state constitution to implement Islamic laws in stages.

The state government had said that it was prepared to challenge the Federal Government in court to determine its right to introduce Islamic laws.

Dr Mahathir said it was the right of PAS to go to court over the matter if it wanted.

"The only thing we will do in court is that we will explain the Constitution; what can be done and what cannot be done. It will be up to the judge to decide whether they can behead or chop off people's hands," he added.

On a report today that the Kelantan Umno may pick a new leader, Dr Mahathir said that the party had not decided on it yet.