

PM: Govt to continue with Islamic policy

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By SAAD HASHIM

LONDON: The Government will continue with gradual injection of Islamic elements in the administration although it will not implement *hudud* laws in states ruled by Barisan Nasional, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said here yesterday.

And, in so far as the criminal justice system was concerned, the courts might also be asked to implement sentences of "community service" in addition to suspended sentence. This was being considered and the public were welcome to debate on the issue, he added.

Dr Mahathir, who addressed Malaysian students during a stopover on his way for a holiday in

the Mediterranean, reminded Muslim radicals in Malaysia that Islam provided sufficient allowances in its rules and this was especially pertinent in a multiracial country.

He said: "This is the burning issue in Malaysia and I am very sad that some Muslims are creating the impression that Islam hates non-Muslims. Islam is a religion for peace. It is not easy to implement the *hudud* laws. In the first place we must know what exactly are *hudud* laws, or else we are only doing it for political reasons.

"We know the tactic of the PAS Government in Kelantan. They announced the decision to implement such laws in the hope the Federal Government would try to stop

them so they could accuse us of being anti-Islam. So we say to them, you go ahead and do it, and see how difficult it is."

Dr Mahathir said, even without the *hudud* laws, Muslims in Malaysia remained a weak community, lacking in many ways to compete with the rest.

He said Malaysia was often criticised by countries like the United States but "look at the US itself, racial riots everywhere."

"They used to have laws on affirmative action to help the non-white and other minorities. Suddenly one white man challenged the law in court and won, forcing the Government to stop all the affirmative action programmes.

"Instead of being criti-

cised, everybody is now asking us how we managed to live in peace and harmony. That means we have been right all along."

When questioned on the Umno-rulers dispute, Dr Mahathir said efforts were being made to define the roles of the rulers because Umno remains a great believer in the monarchy being part of democracy despite the fact that all Bills would not become laws unless signed by the rulers.

"We love our rulers and our existing system. At the same time we don't want our rulers to behave in such a manner that would alienate the people, such as their activities in business. We have seen many examples in many Muslim countries who decided to do away with

their monarchies — Egypt, Iran and Iraq.

"We don't want that to happen in our country. As it is, there is already evidence some of our younger generation are already finding it hard to identify with the monarchy."

He said the rulers wielded vast powers and they, too, enjoy many privileges. "They sometimes indicated that certain contracts should be given to so and so. So too with timber concessions."

"So Umno is worried about all this because the people are bound to know, which will only create hatred against the rulers. So what what we did was to try to define the roles of the rulers. We may succeed, we may not."