

Dr Mahathir: We cannot have 'trial by the media'

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he did not agree with having a "trial by the media" by which reports were carried until the people were influenced by them.

And he cited the case of American footballer O.J. Simpson who was charged with the murder of his ex-wife and her boyfriend.

Dr Mahathir said the case was reported widely until the court (in the US) found it difficult to find uninfluenced juries for the case.

He said unfortunately in Malaysia, the media was also bent on becoming judges.

"They feel they are responsible to correct the wrong situations in society.

"Therefore they report and make allegations and give a lot of particulars on various cases to the extent

we all get influenced and make a conclusion that so and so is guilty or not, based on Press reports," Dr Mahathir said.

He was responding to a question by the former director of the Institut Teknologi Mara Datuk Nik Abdul Rashid Nik Abdul Majid during a dialogue after opening the seminar on the law of evidence and court procedures organised by the Malaysian Institute of Islamic Understanding (Ikim) here.

Nik Abdul Rashid had asked whether the government planned to stop the existence of the "*mahkamah akhbar*" and "*mahkamah parti*" which he said were fanning issues before they were investigated by the police.

Dr Mahathir said the Press was also influenced with making profits and in

the quest to ensure high sales, the factors of justice became small matter.

"When we set aside the elements of justice and pay attention to other matters such as the sales of newspapers, definitely those who become victims or targets will face unfair pressure."

On the actions of "*mahkamah parti*" against the members, Dr Mahathir said that such actions were governed by the party constitution.

"Anyone who causes problems to the party by exposing himself to allegations has already committed an offence as far as the party is concerned."

Dr Mahathir said a party leader "should be whiter than white" and be transparent.

"He may feel what he does is not wrong, but with his action he has exposed him-

self to allegations which, though may not be true, will tarnish the party image."

He also agreed to a suggestion by another participant that there was seemingly a power struggle between the civil and the syariah court, especially in cases involving non-Muslims who were not charged in the syariah court.

Dr Mahathir said the matter still could not be settled and it was because of this that the Federal Government had rejected the *hudud* laws of the Kelantan Government.

At the function, he also launched four books comprising articles by Ikim officials in the newspapers, namely *Islam Penyelesaian Permasalahan Zaman Modern*, *Penjelasan Isu Semasa*, *Islam dan Cabaran Era Baru* and *Quest For Excellence*.