

Govt does not reject Islamic laws, says PM

But it's not possible to implement all of them in a multi-religious society

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues: The government does not reject Islamic laws but acknowledges that under prevailing circumstances, it is not possible to implement all of them fully.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said since Islamic laws are largely uncodified, they are open to many interpretations, some of which are contrary to the Islamic tenets.

"In Malaysia, an attempt has been made to codify Islamic laws pertaining certain societal behaviour and activity.

"But because Malaysia is multi-racial and multi-religious, complete codification is not possible.

"However, the laws of the country are not such as to negate the principles of Islamic laws and Islamic justice. The punishment may be different but the principles are the same," he said.

He was speaking at the opening of an international seminar on *Islamic Law in the Contemporary World* at the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (Ikim) here today.

Mahathir said in keeping with the teachings of Islam, Islamic laws in Malaysia are codified to avoid injustice in keeping with the different interpretations of the Al-Quran and Hadis.

In other Muslim countries where Islamic laws are not codified or fully codified, there have been many arrests involving foreigners which were made quite arbitrarily.

"The relevant Islamic laws under which the arrests are made were not quoted and made known to the offenders.

"The subsequent charges

and trials do not follow any given procedure.

"The presiding judge may make reference to any book or writings, or the Al-Quran or Hadis and sentence is pronounced. Procedures for the defence to put up its case are not generally available."

Mahathir said there is a need for Muslims of the world

to meet, compare notes and discuss Islamic laws and their implementation in their countries.

There is also a need for codification of Islamic laws and standardisation of procedures and punishment for given offences, he said.

"It is not that Islamic justice as prescribed by the Al-Quran or Hadis is inherently unjust. It is just that human fairness and weaknesses have tainted the laws and justice is often denied," he said.

One of the problems faced by those adhering to the principles of Islamic justice is the tendency to mix tribal cultures with Islam.

It is also unfortunate, he said, that so many Muslims believe more in the form than the substance of the religion, although this is not enjoined by Islam.

Mahathir said Islam has become different today from the religion of peace and tolerance that was brought by the Prophet Muhammad.

"Islam has become a rigid, intolerant and seemingly unjust religion to the faithful and to others because of the fanaticism and misplaced orthodoxy of people with vested interests.

The two-day seminar is jointly organised by Ikim and the Department of Syariah Judiciary Malaysia.

Also present were Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Paduka Dr Abdul Hamid Othman and Ikim chairman Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid.