

'A clear sign of arrogance'

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today decried Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Hadi Awang's "arrogance" in wanting to table the Pas Terengganu Government's *Syariah* Criminal Enactment Bill at the State Legislative Assembly sitting next month.

The Deputy Prime Minister said if Pas felt that the Bill was just, it should heed calls that the Bill, which includes *Hudud* and *Qisas*, be referred to the Attorney-General's Chambers.

"This is a clear sign of arrogance, what is there to be worried about ... if you think you are right then why hesitate to forward it (to the A-G's Chamber)?" Abdullah asked when asked for his comments on Hadi's statements.

In seeking to table the Bill, Hadi had said he was more obliged to God than to the A-G's Chamber.

Speaking at a Press conference after declaring open the 2002 Kuala Lumpur International Conference on Biomedical Engineering here (**story and picture on P6**), Abdullah reiterated that the Terengganu Government had to comply with the procedure.

"This is not a legal consideration, it is the law, and we have laws. Yes, for us God is foremost, but there are laws in this world ... if there were no laws, society will be chaotic."

On the establishment of a joint action committee comprising groups

representing women who opposed the hudud provisions proposed in the Bill, Abdullah said their fears were justified.

"The laws of Islam accord due importance to justice," he said.

"What is the point of us having laws implemented by using a system that ultimately gives rise to injustice?"

He said those concerned should take note of objections as genuine feedback that was not politically motivated.

"Maybe those who are adamant on tabling the Bill have political motives," he added.

On DAP chairman Lim Kit Siang's arrest for suspected sedition, Abdullah said police had acted accordingly as the former Opposition leader was believed to have tried to incite the people.

"We view this very seriously," Abdullah said.

He added that Lim's concerns were misplaced and aimed in the wrong direction. Abdullah said that the veteran politician should show his concern over Pas' intention to table hudud laws and not against Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's declaration that Malaysia qualified as an Islamic country.

"We have always held on to the Federal Constitution which assures every Malaysian of their rights.

"We never have and never will touch that, especially the freedom of faith or religion. There is no agenda to turn Malaysia into an Islamic State," assured Abdullah, who is also

Home Minister.

"But I am perplexed as to why Kit Siang has failed to respond or react to the unjust Terengganu *Syariah* Bill," he said, adding that in his view, the DAP chairman's actions were purely political and not an expression of genuine concern for the people.

Touching on the United States' global effort against terrorists, Abdullah said that Kuala Lumpur had informed Washington of the presence of one of the Sept 11 terror suspects in Malaysia in early 2000 but denied having knowledge of the suspect's activities or future plans.

"We were tipped off about the presence of the man here. We would not have known who he was, and then we did confirm that (the suspect's presence to the US authorities)."

Asked if the US authorities had been informed of the suspect having gone to the US, Abdullah said: "I don't know if we notified or not but that is intelligence information. But we knew that he was here and we did inform the US that he was here."

Asked if Kuala Lumpur knew of Washington's follow-up on the information, Abdullah said it was not Malaysia's practice to interfere in their business.

"We did not know what the Americans would want to do. It is not for us even to ask them what action they wanted to take or what other information they had about the man.

"On matters of concern to both our countries we have very good working relations, that's all," he added.