

# State should present Bill to A-G, says Pak Lah

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Terengganu government should have no fear about consulting the Attorney-General's Chambers before presenting its Syariah Criminal Enactment on Hudud and Qisas at the State Assembly next month, said Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"What is there to worry about? If they think it is the right thing, they should present it (the Bill to the A-G's Chambers)," he told reporters after opening the Kuala Lumpur International Conference on Biomedical Engineering 2002 at the JW Marriott Hotel yesterday.

It would mean that the state government was arrogant if it refused to consult the A-G before tabling the Bill at the State Assembly, the Deputy Prime Minister said.

Abdullah, who is also Home Minister, said that to refer the Bill to the A-G's office was not merely a "legal consideration" but the law.

"We have laws that need to be adhered to," he said, responding to a statement by Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang that he would table the Bill without referring to the A-G.

Hadi, who is also the PAS deputy president, had reportedly said that the draft need not be submitted (to the A-G) before being tabled at the assembly as all parties, including the federal authorities, were given the opportunity to send their representatives at the draft seminar held on May 12.

He said that since the chambers' representative, who is the Legal Adviser, was present in each state, there was no need to submit it earlier, adding that his responsibility towards Allah took precedence over fulfilling the A-G's request.

"Obviously we give priority to God, but in this world there are laws," said Abdullah, adding that it would be chaotic if there were no laws governing people.

On another matter, Abdullah said the distribution of pamphlets by DAP chairman Lim Kit Siang denouncing the claim by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that Malaysia was an Islamic country was "a serious matter that was politically motivated."

Lim was arrested in Perak on Wednesday for distributing the pamphlets and later released on bail. He was detained for an offence "suspected to be seditious in nature" under Section 4(1)(c) of the Sedition Act 1948.

Meanwhile, the DAP and several groups have come out to criticise Terengganu on its proposed law.

Wanita DAP secretary Teresa Kok said the state should withdraw the Bill and apologise to

Malaysians for its "insensitive and cruel intention."

Kok, who is also MP for Seputih, said such a discriminatory law was completely unacceptable in Malaysia where women made up more than 50% of the population.

The DAP's deputy chairman Karpal Singh said Hadi should show political maturity by allowing the A-G to study the Bill before it was enacted due to its gravity and potential implications.