

Justice not served in delaying cases: PM

SUN - 8 FEB 2003

PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday cases delayed for a long time cannot be presided over properly.

"We've read of instances where court cases have dragged on for up to seven years. We know that cases cannot be presided over properly as witnesses may forget and some may no longer be alive," he said.

Earlier, he launched e-Syariah, the 7th flagship application under the Multimedia Super Corridor project.

It is an integrated case management system covering the various aspects of syariah court cases.

Mahathir said e-Syariah could

expedite syariah court processes.

On whether a decision has been made on the appointment of a female syariah court judge, he said a decision had not been made "because there are doubts as to whether a woman can become a judge or not."

On why the syariah laws have been placed under the jurisdiction of the state government, he said: "The problem is that under the constitution, the matter of religion is outside the authority of the federal government. Under the state governments (or) more precisely, it's a matter that is a responsibility of the rulers."

On judges who make negative com-

ments pertaining to the law of the country in their judgments, he said there is a line drawn between the legislature, executive and the judiciary.

"If we were to breach this and fail to honour this division, then the other parties will also commit this breach and the authorities may even interfere in the judicial proceedings.

"That is why it is most vital that we uphold this division. Let the legislature determine the laws. If the laws are not good, the people will demand that they are changed," he said.

"That's the system in a democracy. If judges do not apply the law as it is, the whole system will break down."