

Terengganu drops religious snoop squads
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Terengganu has dropped plans to use spies to catch amorous, unmarried Muslim couples having sex, after Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi blasted the plan.

The BN state government has earlier this month said it planned to recruit spies to catch couples engaged in "immoral" activities, including premarital and extramarital sex, in hotels, parks and public places.

In a backdown, the chief minister of Terengganu, Idris Jusoh, said the state would instead focus on other issues faced by Muslims, the Star daily reported.

"We accept the prime minister's view on the matter and we will act accordingly," Idris was quoted as saying.

The state's Islamic religious authorities said the spies would be rewarded for providing tip-offs about couples caught in compromising situations.

But Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on Thursday criticised the plan as an invasion of privacy, and warned the moves could send the wrong message to foreign tourists and ordinary people living in multi-racial Malaysia.

FT squad disbanded

Last year the government ordered the religious department of the Federal Territory, where capital Kuala Lumpur is located, to disband its team of sex snoops in order to avoid invading citizens' privacy.

Terengganu's plan raised fears over the rise of conservative Islamic views in the country, and was also widely criticised by rights groups and the opposition who claimed it could lead to abuses of power.

"Antagonising members of the public who are minding their own business will make us all look like Third World zealots and do other considerable harm to our nation," the Star wrote in an editorial on Sunday.

"Experience demonstrates that religious self-righteousness from any quarter leads nowhere but national ruin," it added, lauding Abdullah's statements.

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