

Beer whipping: Dr M has some troubling questions
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The nation will be celebrating this year's Merdeka by whipping a Muslim woman for drinking beer, said former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

In his latest blog posting, the 84-year-old statesman questioned the Syariah Court's decision to sentence Kartika Sari Dewi Shukarno, a 32-year-old model, to six strokes of the cane.

Mahathir also touched on the possibility of the judge having erred, and asked if Islam was not merciful towards first time offenders.

Kartika's sentence was supposed to be carried out this week but it has since been postponed to after the month of Ramadhan.

Mahathir noted that news of this case has spread across the globe.

"I don't know if this will provide a good or bad image about Islam. As a Muslim, we should not care about other people's perception about Islam when executing our religious obligations.

"But is this sentence correct for the offence of consuming alcohol? Is this punishment contained in Malaysian syariah laws?" he asked.

Mahathir said if the government did not enact syariah laws through debates, the approval of state assemblies, and fatwas by religious scholars, can the writings of certain scholars be used as a reference for punishment based on judges' discretion.

He also asked if enacting syariah laws was forbidden by Islam?
'Don't say I am going to hell'

"I am asking these questions because there is a difference of opinions regarding the sentence imposed on this woman (*left*).

"Don't say that I am unIslamic and that I am going to hell. I am merely asking," he added.

The former premier pointed out that there were 43 verses in the Quran which stressed on the importance of being just when meting out punishment.

"Is there a possibility that a judge is not fair or wrong in his consideration? Is there no mercy in Islam towards first-time offenders?" he asked.

Mahathir said justice and clarity were the cornerstones of Islamic teachings.

"Members of the Islamic jurisprudence are entitled to pen a book on Islamic laws. But as ordinary humans, there is a possibility of making the wrong interpretation," he added.

In the event of doubt, Mahathir said, Islam urged Muslims to refer to the Quran.

"Have we referred to the Quran about drinking beer (alcohol) and the punishment to be meted out in order for justice to be served.

"There is no need for us to be overly concerned about people's perception but mankind must know that Islam propagates justness of the highest order," he added.

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