

# Dr Mahathir: Identify similarities rather than religious differences

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad hopes the comparative analyses at the on-going seminar on religion can conclude with findings of more similarities rather than differences.

The Prime Minister said that this was important as all major world religions strove for the establishment of good and rejected all that could lead to rancour and destruction.

He said this in his message in conjunction with the four-day seminar on the "Role and Influence of Religions in Society" organised by the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia and Goethe Institute Kuala Lumpur.

"I hope that serious effort can be forged towards identifying more points of agree-

ment while a common stand established against matters that are potentially disruptive to the achievement of a peaceful and understanding world that all of us yearn for," he said.

Dr Mahathir is scheduled to deliver his keynote address at the seminar tomorrow.

He said the seminar was not only timely but relevant, particularly in the midst of increasing awareness among society of the potential impact that a society's value system can have on the proper conduct and administration of the various facets of mankind's worldly affairs.

The organisers, he said, should be congratulated for their initiative in conducting the seminar so that more serious platforms exist, within which a greater appreciation of the virtues of religion can be discussed.

"Although this seminar may not be able to exhaust the whole spectrum of issues at hand, it nevertheless, should be able to maintain a healthy momentum of objective inter-faith discourses," he said.

He said the areas to be scrutinised from both the Islamic and German-Christian perspectives had rightly been selected as being among the more crucial ones that constituted the pillars of any society.

Participants of the four-day seminar will try to address four major issues affecting society, namely State philosophy, law, education and family, and economy from religious perspectives by distinguished scholars from Malaysia, Germany and the United

## similarities differences

States.

The scholars from Malaysia and the United States will expound on the role of Islam on these issues while their German counterparts will share their analyses on the influence of Christianity on these issues.

Goethe Institute director Dr Mattias Rick said the seminar was conceived, prepared and organised in the spirit of the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago.

On Sept 4, the Council had issued a declaration on a

code of ethics for the world, following several days of discussions between representatives of the world religions.

He said it was not the purpose of the seminar to make comparison between Islam and Christianity as such. It is to consider the way in which Christian principles continue to operate in the daily life of a secular society like that of Germany and the application of Islamic values in multi-ethnic and multi-religious society like Malaysia's.

Goethe Institute was founded in 1951 to promote the German language abroad and to foster cultural co-operation with other countries.

Ikim chairman Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid said that despite the similarities between Islam and Christianity, great differ-

ences exist between the adherents in terms of behaviour and how they treated each another.

He said that in today's civilised and enlightened world, one's nation sets the standard of right and wrong.

"An individual will support the standpoint of his nation. He does not consider whether the standpoint is based on justice or injustice," he said.

Ahmad Sarji, who is also the Chief Secretary to the Government, said Islam and Christianity were two of the world's major religions which belonged to the same Semitic religious tradition of the Abraham faith.

"Despite the fundamental differences, Islam and Christianity have many similarities by virtue of their common origin based on the traditions and legacy of the true religion of God," he said.