

Dr Mahathir: Rest day switch in line with Islamic tenets

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ALOR STAR, Thurs. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the three remaining states which have yet to switch to a Saturday/Sunday weekend should consider doing so, adding it was not against the teachings of Islam.

"It is not against the teachings of Islam for all states in the country to observe the same rest day," he said.

Dr Mahathir said this to reporters when asked if Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu should follow the move by the Johor and Perlis state governments in switching their Thursday/Friday weekend to a Saturday/Sunday since Jan 1.

The Prime Minister had earlier attended a briefing on the various development programmes in Kedah and held a meeting with State Executive Councillors and senior State Government officials at Wisma Darul Aman here.

Dr Mahathir said: "If the three states follow Islam, they do not have to observe a Friday rest day."

He said the Sunday rest day in the country was introduced by the then British Government in Malaya.

"When the British Gov-

ernment introduced the Saturday/Sunday weekend for the Federated Malay States and the Straits Settlement, the five non-Federated States, which had considered Friday to be sabbath, chose it as their rest day instead.

"However, there is no sabbath in Islam. In fact, we can work every day," he said.

To another question, Dr Mahathir said he was aware that certain quarters would turn the Friday-to-Sunday rest day "switch" in the three states, which are still observing the Thursday/Friday weekend, into a political issue if they decided to do so.

"These people will do so to serve their own political ends and there will also be some people who will oppose a change in the rest day just because a Sunday rest day does not suit them.

"They will also do so because they do not understand Islam very well," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said it was not true that there would be fewer people performing the Friday prayers in Kedah, Terengganu and Kelantan if the states opted for a Sunday rest day.

"In fact, the mosques are always full when Friday is a working day like in Kuala Lumpur.

"The people would stop work to perform the Friday prayers and continue with their work after performing it. This is mentioned in the Quran," he said.

He added if Friday is a rest day, there would be fewer people attending the prayers because many would go travelling or doing something else, and that there would be even fewer people if a public holiday falls on Friday.

"A Sunday rest day will allow us more time to visit places and do other things.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir opened the Darul Aitam Walmasakin Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra and the Musalla Usmani in Jalan Langgar here, fulfilling what Kedah Perkim chairman Datuk Shafie Abdullah said was a wish made by the late Tunku Abdul Rahman.

Shafie said the late Tunku was persistent in asking him to invite Dr Mahathir to open the building.

He added Dr Mahathir did not only agree to open the building but also approved a RM500,000 allocation towards its construction.