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Two-day seminar on Islam's role in nation's progress

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The Malaysia-European Union Joint Seminar: Europe and The Islamic World will focus on the role of Islam in economic, political and social developments in Malaysia.

The two-day seminar, to be opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on March 24, is organised by the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia and the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies.

The New Straits Times is the official newspaper for the event.

Ikim's director-general Datuk Ismail Ibrahim, in an interview on the seminar, said the real challenge for Muslims in Southeast Asia would be to establish Islamic frameworks that allow for positive elements of Western civilisation.

Ismail said the more than 200 million Muslims in Southeast Asia will continue to regard Islamic ethics and values as fundamental to existence.

He said although there were significant non-Muslim minorities living in the midst of Muslim majority societies there had been considerable peace and harmony.

Muslim majority societies in countries such as Malaysia had conferred rights upon their minorities and protected their interests in accordance with Islamic principles, Ismail said.

"Muslim women in Southeast Asia continue to enjoy their rights and discharge their duties which law and society allow them to.

"In fact, compared to Muslim women in other parts of the world, they play an active and dynamic role in society while preserving their Muslim dignity and identity."

Ismail said in Malaysia, the Islamic identity had been retained not only in the syariah law but in politics, the economy, financial systems, culture, literature and education.

"The Arab world and the Muslim world on one hand and Europe and the Western world on the other hand cannot afford to turn their backs on each other.

"Nor can they afford to reduce their relations to the level of mere political contacts and economic exchanges."

(END)