

# Malaysia a model Islamic state

SUN 22 JUL 2001

It is a place where non-Muslims can live and be treated fairly, says Mahathir

**KUALA LUMPUR, Sat:** An Islamic state is not one meant exclusively for Muslims but a state where others can live and be treated fairly.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said this is the model Islamic state that Malaysia is known for and acknowledged by many other Islamic countries.

"As far as we are concerned, Malaysia is already an Islamic state. It is a member of the Organisation of Islamic Conference and it is acknowledged by many Islamic countries as a model Islamic state," he told reporters after launching the new mini-MPV Proton Juara at the KLCC today.

Repeating his call for PAS to clarify its idea of an Islamic state in writing, Mahathir said the party should also explain this in the Chinese and Tamil languages "to enable everyone to understand, not just the Malays".

On Umno's plans to counter PAS's move to set up an Islamic state, Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said a plan is possible only when PAS clarifies the exact nature of the concept.

"You can't counter something you don't know," he said, asking journalists to question PAS about its

interpretation of the Islamic state concept.

A reporter said the basis of PAS's version of an Islamic state was outlined in its election manifesto for Kelantan and Terengganu, to which Mahathir said the non-Muslim population is larger on the west coast.

"Let's see what they have in store for the whole of Malaysia," Mahathir said.

Asked if economic adviser to the government Datuk Mustapa Mohamed will replace former Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainudin as National Economic

Action Council executive director, he said: "We have not decided yet, but we do need a replacement."

Mahathir also said Malaysia is not very concerned with the negative perception that foreign fund managers have of the way the government han-

dles its corporate restructuring exercises.

"We will only worry if we are going around begging for money, but we are not doing that," he said.

At the function, Proton paid tribute to Mr Universe Sazali Samad and master bowler Shalin Zulkifli.