

PM: We are an Islamic state

SUN 30 SEP 2001

PAS wants non-Muslims to turn against Umno, says Mahathir

PAS wants Umno to set up its version of an Islamic state so that the latter's non-Muslim friends will turn against it. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said that Malaysia is already an Islamic state, adding that many ulama have defined the concept of an Islamic state and that Malaysia qualifies as one.

"There are about 50 countries acknowledged to be Islamic nations, accepted as members of the Organisation of Islamic Countries.

"Our research shows that almost all of these nations do not implement hudud laws, but are considered to be Islamic," Mahathir said when opening Gerakan's Annual Delegates Conference yesterday.

He said, therefore, that Malaysia has every right to regard itself an Islamic country.

"If Malaysia is not Islamic because hudud laws are not implemented, then there are no Islamic nations as none have been able to implement it."

Mahathir later told reporters that Malaysia is not

only acknowledged by the world as an Islamic nation, it is also seen by Arab nations as a model Islamic state.

Mahathir said the non-Muslims here also accept that Malaysia is a tolerant Islamic country.

"The law is there for non-Muslims. In the era of the Khalifahs, they didn't charge *zakat* for non-Muslims. Other laws governed them," he said.

Mahathir said PAS had been asked to explain in writing the type of Islamic state they want to set up.

"(But) They said they would only explain the mode of administration after they win ... they want to hoodwink voters into blindly choosing them," he said.

Mahathir said the Opposition often exploited such issues in an effort to test the commitment of Barisan Nasional component parties to the concept of tolerance.

"If we're not careful, we can be trapped when striving to prove who better serves the interests of all races," he said.

Gerakan president Da-

tuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik also urged PAS to define its proposed Islamic state.

"Our perception is that PAS wants to set up an Islamic state with either syariah or hudud laws governed by a council of ulama. This is unaccept-

able," he said.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said: "Islam is the official religion and its liberalism allows other religions to flourish.

"What is important for this country is the mark of

the BN Islamic state that is acceptable to the various races and in accordance with the Constitution which was drawn up by the founding fathers of Malaysia."

He also said that in certain aspects of hudud law

in Kelantan, the death penalty is prescribed if apostasy is committed.

"No wonder then that they have not dared to put down in writing their idea of an Islamic state should they ever form a government," Ling said.