

PM: No need for debate

Malaysians are not confused about Islamic state issue

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri: There is no need for a debate on whether Malaysia is an Islamic state, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The prime minister said there is no confusion among the various races and religions on the issue as they have been living together in an Islamic country without any problems.

Speaking to reporters after the Barisan Nasional Supreme Council meeting today, he said: "Just because Umno declared recently that Malaysia is an Islamic country, this does not mean there are going to be changes."

Mahathir, who is the BN chairman, said the leaders of all the component parties that met

today are "comfortable" with the current concept of Malaysia as an Islamic state. However, he added that they are concerned about PAS's interpretation of an Islamic state.

PAS yesterday accepted a suggestion by Umno religious bureau chairman Tan Sri Abdul Hamid Othman that the two parties conduct an academic debate on the Islamic state issue.

Mahathir, who is also the Umno president, said: "We know they won't agree. They are looking for political mileage. They want political profits from this, not profit for Malaysia."

Asked if PAS would have a moral standing on the issue, he said: "PAS has no moral standing on this because it is a political party. Only the Mufti and the Rulers have got moral standing on this.

"Islam is under the

(purview) of the Rulers. PAS should listen to the Rulers but they instead go against them."

Mahathir said the BN component parties are also of the opinion that the DAP, which quit the opposition pact recently after an

argument with PAS over the issue, should come clean on its views of the concept of an Islamic state.

"They have also been here without a problem. What changes do they want? If they have suggestions, they can explain."

Last Saturday, Mahathir said Malaysia is already an Islamic state, adding that many ulama had defined the concept of an Islamic state and that Malaysia qualifies as one such state.

Earlier today, Minister in the Prime Minister's De-

partment Brig-Jen (Rtd) Datuk Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin said the government had adhered to the requirements of an Islamic state as defined in the Quran in terms of education, banking and eradication of poverty.