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Dr M: Pas trying to create rift

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IT is Pas' hope that when Umno declares Malaysia as an Islamic State the latter's non-Muslim component parties in the Barisan Nasional will oppose it, Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"Recently the Pas president (Datuk Fadzil Noor) challenged Umno to declare Malaysia an Islamic country.

"Pas' hope is that by declaring Malaysia as an Islamic country, our non-Muslim friends in the Barisan Nasional will oppose Umno just as the DAP opposed Pas because of its (Pas) plan to set up an Islamic State."

The Prime Minister said this in his speech when declaring open Gerakan's 30th national delegates conference yesterday.

"Umno wants to say clearly that Malaysia is an Islamic country," said Dr Mahathir who is also BN chairman.

He said this was based on the opinion of ulama of the past who had clarified what constituted an Islamic country.

Dr Mahathir said presently there were more or less about 50 countries that had been accepted as and declared to be Islamic countries.

"They are accepted to be members of the Organisation of Islamic Conference even though there are non-Muslims in these countries."

Dr Mahathir said research conducted showed that nearly all Islamic countries were not able to implement the hudud (Islamic ruling).

"Yet, these countries are accepted and they profess to be Islamic countries.

"That being so, when we state that Malaysia is an Islamic country we have the right to do so. If Malaysia is not an Islamic country because of not implementing the hudud, then in this world there is no Islamic country as all those countries too cannot implement hudud," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia is a nation of different races that practise various religions.

"The majority of the people in this country are Muslims. Muslims are in power. The power held by Muslims is not to oppress non-Muslims. Instead when Muslims are in power, they must rule fairly.

"That is Islam's teaching," he said, adding that was why in Malaysia non-Muslims were not oppressed although the official religion was Islam.

He said it was found that non-Muslims did not oppose the present system of Government, a system which he said was accepted by Islam as being suitable for an Islamic country.

The Prime Minister said Pas had been asked to clarify in writing as to the form and concept of an Islamic State that Pas intended to set up.

"Are they going to abolish civil and criminal laws? By clarifying this they can show the difference of an Islamic country as set up by Umno which is accepted by the world and Pas' Islamic State.

"What is their answer?," Dr Mahathir asked.

He said Pas would only clarify as to the type and administration of an Islamic country after the party had gained power.

"This shows that they intend to cheat voters into voting with their eyes closed. (Pas think) Muslims will vote for them, thinking that they will set up an Islamic country that is different from now."

He said a party which claimed it struggled for Islam should not try to cheat.

"Umno is straight forward with Malaysians of all races. If Umno says Malaysia is an Islamic country, it is because in an Islamic country, non-

Muslims have specific rights," Dr Mahathir said, adding that although Islam was the official religion, followers of other religions were free to practise their religions.

"This is in line with teachings of Islam. There is no compulsion. Islam does not like chaos that may come about if Islamic laws are enforced on non-Muslims.

"So if non-Muslims assume that Malaysia is a secular country, that is their interpretation and they are free to make their interpretation," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the DAP had discussed in depth with Pas about the latter's plan to set up an Islamic State and the DAP had now left the "imitation Front" after realising Pas' intention to cheat it.

Speaking at a Press conference later, Dr Mahathir said he had many times stated that Malaysia was an Islamic country and called on Fadzil to stop asking.

Dr Mahathir said even during the era of the Caliphs after Prophet Muhammad's demise, no tithes were levied on non-Muslims.

"So what we are doing is in line with Islam."

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