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Islamic state: Umno to explain

Jason Gerald

KUANTAN, Sun. - Umno will meet Barisan Nasional component parties to explain Malaysia's status as an Islamic country, Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Mohd Khalil Yaakob said today.

He said the explanation would not only be done at formal meetings but also informal meetings between leaders and members of the component parties. "This will give a chance to Umno to give a clear understanding of an Islamic country in the local context.

"We, in the BN, have already got a good understanding and by explaining Malaysia's position as an Islamic country to other BN members would further enhance the co-operation between Umno and other component parties," he said.

Mohd Khalil said this to reporters when asked to comment on Dr Mahathir's statement in his speech when declaring open Gerakan's 30th national delegates conference on Saturday that "Umno wants to say clearly that Malaysia is an Islamic country".

He had earlier closed the Kemas kindergarten's sports day in Indera Mahkota here.

Khalil said Malaysia was already acknowledged as an Islamic state by other Islamic countries and its leaders at various conferences.

"These countries were satisfied when they saw the situation in Malaysia which had the criteria for an Islamic state."

On the response of non-Muslims to the Prime Minister's announcement that Malaysia was an Islamic state, Khalil said based on the statements of BN component party leaders, they accepted the assurance that the Government would not restrict non-Muslims from practising their respective religions.

He said what Umno was doing to uphold the position of Islam in Malaysia encompassed the administration and the laws acceptable and understood by both Muslims and non-Muslims.

He said Dr Mahathir's statement clearly answered several questions which had been raised pertaining to Malaysia being an Islamic state.

On the other hand, Pas did not explain anything apart from saying that in the States in which it was in power, non-Muslims could go about the lives as usual.

Khalil said the DAP's admission that the concept of the Islamic state as upheld by Umno was more tolerant proved there was no problem among non-Muslims over Malaysia being an Islamic state.

DAP life adviser Dr Chen Man Hin said today if compared with the Pas concept of an Islamic state, the Umno concept was more tolerant and acceptable to non-Muslims.