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Zainuddin-Islam

MALAYSIA NEVER REGARDED AS SECULAR STATE, SAYS ZAINUDDIN

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 7 (Bernama) -- Malaysia was never regarded as a secular state, according to Information Ministry parliamentary secretary Datuk Zainuddin Maidin.

Criticising the DAP for questioning the government's labelling of the country as an Islamic state, he said no secular state would approve laws advancing the interests of a particular religion.

"In this country, provisions for the development of other religions cannot be made by Parliament and the propagation of other religions through official government organs like tv and radio is not allowed.

"This has already been accepted as a convention," he told Bernama today.

Zainuddin was commenting on the shock expressed by DAP leaders over the announcement by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Sept 29 that Malaysia was an Islamic state.

DAP chairman Lim Kit Siang, in a statement, asked: "How and when did Malaysia transform from a secular state to an Islamic state? Is it on the declaration of the prime minister or on the expressed wishes of the people?"

DAP secretary-general Kerk Kim Hock, in a separate statement, said Malaysians who accepted the secular system defined in the Federal Constitution were shocked by Dr Mahathir's announcement.

Zainuddin said the DAP leaders' reaction gave the impression that the party could not accept several laws concerning Islam approved by Parliament over the years.

"Has the DAP all this while been unable to accept the setting up of the (International) Islamic University, Bank Islam and others...causing them to express shock over Dr Mahathir's announcement that Malaysia is an Islamic state," he said.

Zainuddin agreed with Dr Mahathir that there was no need to amend the Federal Constitution to declare Malaysia as an Islamic state.

He said this was because the matter had been "understood and well accepted by non-Muslims when several laws concerning Islam were approved by Parliament".

Dr Mahathir, in his statement on Sept 29, said there was no need to amend the constitution as "Malaysia is already an Islamic state".

-- BERNAMA

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