

# PM 'shocker' .

ISSIN 1 JUN 2002

## Malaysia a model 'fundamentalist' Islamic state: Mahathir

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia is an Islamic fundamentalist state as its policy is to abide by the fundamental teachings of Islam, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He told the **Dewan Rakyat** yesterday that he had "shocked" western leaders with this explanation during recent visits to the United States and Europe, reports Bernama.

"When I said this, they were shocked because they considered a fundamentalist as someone who is violent and did all kinds of bad things, but to me it is not.

"If we hold to the fundamentals of Islam, we will not become bad as Islam exhorts us to be on good brotherly terms, united, do good things and hence it is not wrong to be an Islamic fundamentalist," he said when replying to PAS acting president and Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk **Hadi Awang** during question time.

He said that about **15** years ago the western press, when reporting about him, said that he was a fundamentalist and he was not ashamed when acknowledging himself as an Islamic fundamentalist.

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Mahathir, seen by the west as a moderate Muslim leader, said when he explained his stance to the western leaders, they agreed that their use of the word "fundamentalist" had been inaccurate.

The prime minister, who has this year met US President George W. Bush, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Pope John Paul II among others, said many leaders showed an interest in knowing more about Islam after the Sept 11 attacks on the United States.

He said that he is glad that he was able to explain this to several non-Muslim leaders.

Replying to Dr Tan Seng Giaw (DAP-Kepong), Mahathir said Malaysia is not only an Islamic state as acknowledged by other countries but also a model Islamic state.

The DAP objects to Mahathir's definition last year of Malaysia as an "Islamic state", saying it is against the secular constitution.

Mahathir said there is no reason for the DAP to feel oppressed over statements about Malaysia being an Islamic state as the Federal Constitution (pertaining to Islam) has never been amended.

He has repeatedly told non-Muslims they have nothing to fear from his definition of the country as "Islamic", while accusing PAS of wanting to impose a Taliban-like regime.