

Forum to discuss Islamic state idea

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STAR

18 JUL 2002

KUALA LUMPUR: Is there such a thing as an Islamic state? How did the idea of an Islamic state evolve in modern times? What are the characteristics of an Islamic state in contemporary times?

These are some of the questions to be raised at the International Forum on Islam (Kalif 2002) here during the weekend.

The forum is expected to draw speakers from a wide range of countries including the US, Canada, South Africa, Iran, Britain, Switzerland, Egypt, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will deliver the keynote address on Friday to kick off the three-day forum, organised by the Deputy Prime Minister's Office.

On the first day, participants would look into a very current topic - an assessment of Islamic states post-1945.

They would analyse the success and failure of countries that have declared themselves or are seen other Muslims as Islamic states.

These include Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran. The group would examine whether these countries are models and if not, what went wrong. It would look at how these states addressed issues related to non-Muslim minorities, fundamental liberties, women, economics, politics, culture and its relations with the West.

Speakers for this session would be Dr Ahmet Davutoglu, a professor of international relations at Beykent University, Turkey; Dr Ziba Mir Hosseini from Iran, a

research associate at Cambridge University who has a number of publications on Middle East issues and Islam and Dr Abdelwahab El-Affendi a senior research fellow at the University of Westminster, Britain.

The second day would see the discussion another very current topic - politics of Islamic movements. The Islamic resurgence had over the last 30 years given birth to a variety of Islamic movements and what are the common traits that define them or how do they differ from one another.

The highlight would be a public forum at PWTC on Saturday night. Speakers would talk about human rights, democracy, politics and economics of globalisation and its cultural impact and the challenge and response from the Muslim world.