

M'sia recognised as an Islamic state, says PM

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SHAH ALAM: Malaysia is indeed an Islamic country as it is acknowledged to be one by the people and the world at large despite it not being stated as such in the Constitution, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

In fact, the Prime Minister said, Malaysia was recognised by other Islamic countries as a model Islamic state.

"When I say that Malaysia is an Islamic country, there is no reason for a controversy as I am merely stating a fact that has been accepted by all, including the non-Muslim citizens in the country.

"They (the non-Muslims) don't question this because there is no change in the Constitution and there is no plan to introduce new laws.

"It is only the politicians who twist the matter and try to capitalise on it to fish for votes," he said at a dialogue after opening a seminar on *Understanding Malaysia as an Islamic Country* here yesterday.

Responding to a query on the need for him to state that Malaysia was an Islamic country when the Constitution defined it as a democratic country with Islam as an official religion, Dr Mahathir said:

"Malaysia is an Islamic country based on the accepted interpretation that Islam is the official religion.

"The fact that ours is a multi-racial country with a Muslim majority, and the fact that many leaders of the country, including ministers, comprise non-Muslims, does not detract from that fact.

"It is the same with England

which was recognised as part of Christendom after it accepted the Anglican Church as its official religion. That fact does not preclude it having a leader of different faith as one of its prime ministers was a Jew."

Another example, he said, was Iraq, which the world regarded as an Islamic country but its foreign minister was a Christian.

At a press conference later, Dr Mahathir said that from the start, Malaysia was already an Islamic country but he had to reiterate the fact when PAS tried to confuse the people by stating that its struggle was to set up an Islamic state.

Earlier in his speech, Dr Mahathir said the Government could come up with clear proof that all the teachings of Islam that could be implemented in the country

had already been implemented.

In doing so, he said, the Government had also taken into consideration the non-Muslim population to ensure that there was justice for all.

The problem of disunity among Muslims, he said, was due to a small group of people who rejected the views of the majority.

"Those who reject the views of the majority of Muslims in this country, who wish to divide Muslims and create chaos, have no right to question whether Malaysia is Islamic or otherwise.

Dr Mahathir said that the recognition from people with political and vested interests, particularly those who ridicule Islamic teachings by making wild claims such as that "God is a gangster," was not important.