

# Najib: Dr M respected for his pragmatic approach

STAR - 9 NOV 2002

KUALA LUMPUR: The Muslim community in Malaysia should be proud that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is respected for his pragmatic approach towards creating a modern Islamic nation, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said.

He said he had accompanied Dr Mahathir on an official visit to Mecca four years ago, where he saw the Prime Minister being accorded a very special treatment by the Saudi Arabian government.

Najib said although many leaders of Islamic countries had conducted official visit to Saudi Arabia, Dr Mahathir

was among the chosen few to be given this treatment.

"Many foreign leaders had visited the Prophet Muhammad's tomb, but Dr Mahathir was given a special treatment where the doors to the tomb were opened so that Dr Mahathir could take a closer look at the Prophet's grave.

"A Saudi Arabian leader said he himself didn't have the chance to take a closer look at the Prophet's grave all this while.

"That event was significant because it showed that Dr Mahathir was given a very extraordinary welcome by the Saudi Arabian government.

"This shows that Dr Maha-

thir is considered a respected leader in the Islamic world because of his pragmatic views," Najib said in his speech at a breaking-of-fast gathering with the Muslim community at the Ubudiah mosque in Kampung Segambut Dalam yesterday.

Najib said the respect accorded to Dr Mahathir should put to rest criticisms against him that he was not an Islamic leader.

Najib later gave away donations to needy villagers.

About 1,800 people received RM100 each, a 10kg pack of rice and religious books, which was provided by the Federal Territory Umno.