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Dr M: Malaysia recognised the world over as model Islamic nation

SHAH ALAM, Tues. - Malaysia is not only internationally recognised but also qualified to be an Islamic nation despite the fact that it is a multi-racial and multi-religious country, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad reiterated today.

The Prime Minister said there was nothing wrong with his earlier remarks describing Malaysia as an Islamic nation as the country had all the necessary provisions for Muslims while not denying the non-Muslims their rights as citizens.

"It is a fact that Malaysia has been a Muslim country from day one and because Pas played up the issue we had to clarify that we are already an Islamic nation," he said at a Press conference after delivering a keynote address at the Understanding Malaysia As An Islamic Nation seminar here.

"What is the need for them to be wanting to set up an Islamic state?" Dr Mahathir asked, adding that it was the politicians who were bent on manipulating his statement to confuse the rakyat and fish for votes.

"The non-Muslims are not objecting to my statement, only the politicians are harping on it for their own narrow agenda."

The seminar is jointly organised by the Selangor Government, the Institute of Mind Development (Inmind) and the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (Ikim).

Dr Mahathir said that such a seminar was necessary to explain the fundamentals of the country but expressed doubt that those bent on discrediting the Government would be convinced.

"They will never accept, they will keep on telling lies and try to convince the people that we are wrong and they are right. So it is a question of people with a different agenda altogether.

"They are not interested in Islam, they are not interested in following the teachings of Islam, all they are interested in is making use of Islam... so these people will never be convinced," he said, responding to reporters' questions.

Earlier in his keynote address which was followed by a 15-minute dialogue session with participants, Dr Mahathir warned Muslims of the threat posed by certain factions of the community, whose actions of dividing the ummah closely resembled the acts of the Khawarij sect in post Prophet Muhammad's time.

The Prime Minister said the Government could come up with clear proof that all the teachings of Islam that could be implemented by the Government in Malaysia had already been implemented.

He also said that Islamic laws (syariah) were enforced in the country while not neglecting the fact that non-Muslims were also part of the populace as justice was the main factor in the implementation of Islamic laws.

Dr Mahathir explained that the syariah law could only be fully implemented in an environment where 100 per cent of the population were of the Islamic faith.

"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 an Islamic country or otherwise.

"This minority group has no mandate to determine whether this country is Islamic or not," he said, stressing that recognition from groups with vested interests, particularly those who ridicule Islamic teachings by

claiming that Allah was the biggest gangster, was not important.

At the dialogue session later, Dr Mahathir was posed with several questions pertaining to the irresponsible acts of twisting the teachings of Islam and the declaration of Malaysia as an Islamic nation.

Responding to a question from an opposition party leader who participated in the seminar, Dr Mahathir said that the Reid Commission which drew up the Federal Constitution did not state that this was an Islamic nation because the Commission had no idea, at that time, what such a nation constituted.

"I don't know how much they (Reid Commission) know about the true meaning of an Islamic nation. All they knew at that point of time was that a multi-racial, multi-religious society could only exist in a secular state.

"They only knew of the nation-state concept, but if you look at history, at the Islamic Empire, there were many regions where the non-Muslims lived together and even contributed effectively to the administration of these regions," he said, adding that this was still prevalent in many Islamic countries including Iraq.

"Iraq is recognised the world over as an Islamic nation and now they are being targeted because they are an Islamic nation, (Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister) Tareq Aziz is a Christian but there is no problem in that because Iraq is still recognised as an Islamic nation."

Dr Mahathir reiterated that Malaysia is recognised the world over as a model Islamic nation and not as a model of a secular state.