

Two versions of Dr M's Islamic state remarks
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Two different versions have emerged with regard to Dr Mahathir Mohamad's take on the Islamic state issue.

Umno-owned Utusan Malaysia quoted the former premier as saying that Malaysia is eligible to be defined as an Islamic state while at the same time, cannot be acknowledged as a secular state or "otherwise".

Whereas Sin Chew Daily reported Mahathir as saying that Malaysia lacked the "conditions" to be an Islamic state.

The former premier and Umno president was speaking to reporters after attending a forum last night.

Mahathir was responding to Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Jamil Khir Baharom who in a parliamentary reply denied that Malaysia is a secular state.

In 2001, Mahathir, who was then still prime minister, declared that Malaysia is already an Islamic state when speaking at the Gerakan national conference.

Mahathir was speaking to reporters at the government-backed 2nd Asian Metropolitan City Summit in Kuala Lumpur.

While Umno-owned Utusan newspaper carried Mahathir's comments at the top of its inside page with the headline 'Malaysia qualifies to be called an Islamic country - Tun Mahathir', there did not appear to be any direct quotes from the country's fourth prime minister to back this.

The Utusan report instead quotes Dr Mahathir cautioning that a country cannot be known as an Islamic country unless Islamic laws apply to all.

He adds that according to Islam doctrines, an Islamic country must strive to give justice to all irregardless of race and religion and as such Malaysia cannot qualify to be an Islamic state if it has two sets of laws - one that applies to Muslims and another for non-Muslims.

Dr M rebuts Jamil Khir's statement

Meanwhile, Sin Chew's report on the same event has the octogenarian statesman rebutting Islamic affairs minister Jamil Khir Baharom's controversial reply in parliament.

“So, when you say the Civil Court no jurisdiction power to hear matters under the purview of Syariah Court, this is wrong,” Mahathir was quoted as saying.

“Although we have the conditions to become an Islamic state, but it is not a legal interpretation by law. There are some countries around the world claimed themselves to be Islamic republics, but Malaysia will not call ourselves an Islamic republic.”

Mahathir, who was Malaysia’s premier for 22 years before stepping down in 2003, said that he had accepted that Malaysia practiced a common law accepted by everyone for a long time.

“It has no limitations and no discrimination against other religions,” he was quoted as saying.

Although during his time as prime minister Mahathir was hailed as a model Islamic leader among many Muslim nations, Sin Chew also noted that he had on many occasions avoided making a hard stand on this issue.

Mahathir also warned that if people keep raising the ‘Islamic state or secular state’ issue, it will only damage the Malaysian multi-ethnic society.

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