

WHO SPEAKS FOR ISLAM

WHO SPEAKS FOR THE WEST

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NO ROOM FOR INTOLERANCE: Najib speaking at the conference in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. — Picture by Fathil Asri

DPM: Silent majority must speak up

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — The rising tension in Muslim-West relations is largely due to the tolerant and moderates of the two groups opting to remain silent over issues relating to Islam.

This silent majority has either been silenced or chosen to remain so for fear of speaking up, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said.

Najib said, as a result, the silent majority looked on as the extremists and intolerant minority took over and turned the civilisational dialogue between Islam and the West into an ugly shouting match.

“These angry voices that are taking centre stage and drowning out the reasoned and cultured voices of both groups.

“We have allowed them to speak

for us,” he said in his closing remarks at the international conference “Who speaks for Islam? Who speaks for the West?” by the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations today.

Thus, Najib suggested that intellectuals and scholars of both Islam and the West meet and share ideas and have those ideas disseminated and explained to the wider public.

He said it was the responsibility of scholars and intellectuals on both sides to educate the public and sow the seeds for greater tolerance and understanding between the Muslim and Western traditions.

“It is in this spirit of tolerance that Malaysia, under the guidance of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, has chosen the approach of *Islam Hadhari* or civilisa-

tional Islam.

“The *Islam Hadhari* framework reminds us that Islam compels us to acquire knowledge so that we can improve ourselves and our *ummah* and develop the country, thereby further enhancing the position of Islam.

“There is no room for intolerance and bigotry in the framework of *Islam Hadhari*, and the peace and harmony enjoyed by Malaysians is a result of this understanding and approach to Islam and its principles.”

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said the Organisation of Islamic Conference may call for an emergency meeting of its foreign ministers to discuss the publication of caricatures of Prophet Muhammad.

Bernama reports that Denmark has asked Malaysia to help restrain

worldwide Muslim rage directed chiefly at the European nation whose media first published the caricatures of Prophet Muhammad which were later reprinted by media in several other countries.

Syed Hamid said he received a telephone call from his Danish counterpart Per Stig Moller yesterday seeking Malaysia’s co-operation to contain the situation from growing out of control and creating a rift between the West and Islam.

“He asked for Malaysia’s co-operation to explain the situation and their respect for Islam, that they had no intention to hurt the feelings of Muslims.”

He said Denmark stressed that its Government did not share the views on Islam promoted by the country’s media.