

Review issues on Islam, says Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR: There is a need to look at the issues involving Islam which made headlines the past few weeks, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

However, he said, it was up to the Government to decide whether this could be done by amending Article 121(1A) of the Federal Constitution or by other means.

"People can make calls (to amend the Constitution) as this is a free country. Obviously, many people want this problem resolved and it is up to the Government to decide," he told reporters yesterday after a talk on 'The Global Political-Economic Scenario Beyond 2020; Its Ramifications and Implications with Special Reference to Malaysia'.

Acknowledging that the Article was last amended during his tenure, the former prime minister said: "Well, during my time there was no protest. I suppose I got away with it."

Earlier during the dialogue session, Dr Mahathir said he was no less a Malay nationalist than most Malays simply because he had advocated the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English.

"I just would like to see Malaysians catch up with the latest knowledge in Science and Mathematics. It is easier to access the knowledge if you understand English, rather than have somebody else translate it into Bahasa Malaysia.

"There are not many people who understand the subject matter in both English and Bahasa Malaysia."

Even the early Arabs had to master Greek before they could start pioneer works in science and medicine, he added.

On the future of Islam in a globalised world, he said the survival of Muslims would depend on how good they were at interpreting the religion.

"If the Muslims want to do well and to be able to compete with others, they need to go back to the fundamental teaching of Islam as found in the Quran and the verified *hadis*," he said.

"If they continue to believe in dubious translations of the Quran, then they will be in trouble."

He also said that there was a need to review the education system in the country so that charac-



Dr Mahathir: 'People can make calls (to amend the Constitution) as this is a free country'

ter-building and the acquiring of knowledge could be equally emphasised.

Knowledge in the hands of people with no values would be destructive to the society, he said.

"If our students are only taught how to acquire knowledge without having good values, then we are going to have a society of materialistic people who will not care how their wealth come about, and who are willing to cheat."

In his talk, Dr Mahathir said the world would head towards a real disaster if countries continued to produce nuclear weapons.

This, he said, was a very dangerous trend, particularly now that the world was in the midst of World War III; a war against terrorism that was not fought in any one country, but all over the world.

"If you go by the number of deaths involving innocent people, then the biggest terrorists in the world are civilised countries," he said.