

THE STAR

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Religious controversies occur everywhere, says Dr M

KUALA LUMPUR: Religious controversies occur in countries around the world and Malaysia should not be singled out over the "Allah" issue, said Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The former prime minister said he had a bad impression on countries such as Switzerland which banned the construction of minarets on mosques and France for prohibiting women from wearing headscarves.

"These things happen to every country.

"It is up to the media to point out that we are not the only culprit as others are also very unreasonable or restrictive," he said after witnessing a signing ceremony for lubricants supply, technical and commercial collaboration between Petronas Lubricants International Sdn Bhd and Proton Holdings Bhd here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on the negative perception Malaysia was getting from abroad on the current tug-of-war between the

Muslims and Christians over the usage of the word "Allah".

On the suggestion by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz to allow non-Muslims in certain states to use the word "Allah", Dr Mahathir said there appeared to be some conflict.

"On one hand, we hear that the Government will wait for the Court of Appeal's decision. But on the other hand, Nazri seems to have anticipated the decision by saying so and so can use the word while others cannot," he said.

"I don't know what's happening. I'm not in the Government anymore, as you know."

On Monday, Nazri said the use of the word "Allah" was allowed for non-Muslims in the Federal Territories, Penang, Sabah and Sarawak as the head of state was not a Sultan.

However, he added that the other states in the country had Islamic affairs enactments which prohibited the use of the word by non-Muslims.