

MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

'HOLD TALKS TO COMBAT ISLAMOPHOBIA'

Conferences on Islamic topics will boost ties between Muslims and others, says PM

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THE lack of discussions to create mutual understanding among people of different religions and cultures may lead to fear and hostility toward Islam, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said.

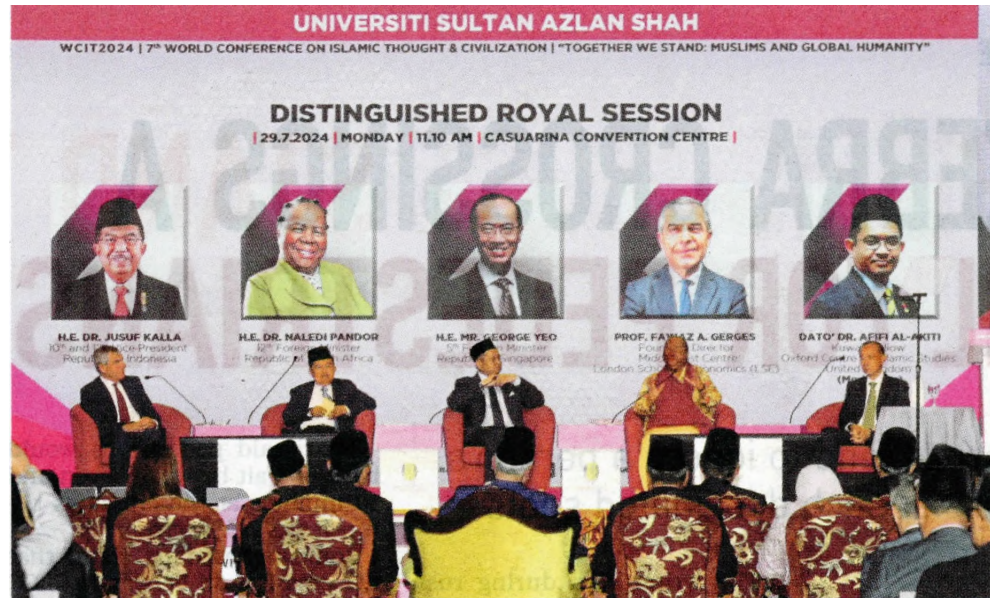
The prime minister added that all parties should engage in di-

alogues and other platforms to foster unity in a multiracial country like Malaysia.

"The West, after the post-colonial period, still retains old precepts of others.

"Consequently, their misunderstanding, misinformation and rejection of others result in what we now term Islamophobia.

"We must also take responsibility when discussing civilisation.



Speakers engaging in a discussion at the 7th World Conference on Islamic Thought and Civilisation in Ipoh yesterday. PIC BY L. MANIMARAN

"How do we survive and live in a multiracial, multi-religious society like Malaysia if we avoid discussing other religions, cultures, and civilisations, while demanding that the West understand us?"

Anwar said this at the three-day 7th World Conference on Islamic Thought and Civilisation (WCIT).

The event was officiated by Sultan of Perak Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah. Those present included Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Menteri Besar Perak

Datuk Seri Saarani Mohamad.

Anwar added that conferences on Islamic topics were necessary for mutual understanding between Muslims and others.

"The problem we face is complete ignorance.

"We tend to address issues out of prejudice rather than empathy.

"This engagement is essential for us to understand others and for them to understand us.

"That is why we encourage not only conferences like the WCIT, but also dialogues on Islam and

Confucianism, which are relevant not only to Malaysia but also to this region," he said.

He added that differences in race, tribe and colour were determined by Allah.

"This is not about tolerance. It is about learning from one another, understanding each other and appreciating our differences.

"We must have the courage to continue this engagement.

"This is necessary to achieve not only peace and prosperity, but also sustainability through reasoned discourse."