

'Malaysia Islamic even if it does not practise hudud'

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KUALA LUMPUR, July 4:

Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad remains adamant that he is not wrong in calling Malaysia an Islamic state and denying that it is a secular state.

Instead, he pointed out that many other countries which had been labelled as "Islamic" did not actually qualify for the title and also did not practise hudud.

"There are many interpretations of what constitutes an Islamic state.

"There are many states which call themselves Islamic and many which are recognised as Islamic without having 'Islamic' before their names.

"Their Islamic credentials are not always the same.

"Some actually declare themselves to be secular states but are nevertheless considered Islamic," blogged Dr Mahathir.

He continued that none of the over 50 states in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) shared the same Constitution or laws to qualify as Islamic and some might not even have a Constitution, written or otherwise.

"When I claimed that Malaysia is an Islamic country, I was comparing it with those Islamic countries whose application of Islamic laws and injunctions appear to be less rigid.

"But then Islamic laws and injunctions are not as rigid as some Muslims would have us believe.

"Islam allows for some looseness or differences of interpretation so that Islam can be practised under different circumstances and in different parts of the world at different periods in history," he wrote, adding, however, that some things are inviolable such as the declaration of faith in the one Allah and that Muhammad is His messenger.

Moving on to claim that most states which claim to be Islamic do not apply hudud laws, Dr Mahathir wrote that they applied the syariah for most things involving family and social affairs and practices.

"Islam as Ad Deen, as a way of life, prescribes the correct and acceptable ways of conducting personal, family and social life.

"These syariah laws help keep relations within the Muslim society and between Muslims and non-Muslims largely free of conflicts and misunderstandings.

“In Islam, there is no compulsion.

“Islam acknowledges the existence of non-believers and specifically enjoins upon us Muslims to accept that we pray (and do things) our own way while non-believers pray and do things their way. The verse (*Al Khafirun*) concludes by saying, ‘To them their religion, to us our religion’.”

Referring to the 43 verses which enjoin upon Muslims to “judge with justice”, he pointed out that justice is very important in Islam.

“There is no injunction to do justice only to Muslims and not to the non-Muslims. Certainly there is nothing in the syariah enjoining injustice for Muslims.

“In multi-religious Malaysia, because applying the hudud to Muslims and not to non-Muslims would cause injustice to Muslims, in the interest of upholding Islamic justice for all, we have not implemented hudud.

“Islam is not so rigid that injustice should be ignored in carrying out what is enjoined by the syariah,” wrote Mahathir.

He continued that Islam was the official religion of Malaysia and Muslims were not obstructed from practising the teachings of Islam.

However, although hudud laws are not applied here, it is not because they are rejected, but because Malaysians are enjoined to uphold justice.

“To cut off the hands of Muslims for stealing while non-Muslim thieves would only get two months’ jail cannot be regarded as just. The sentence must be the same for both.

“If we cut the hands of non-Muslims in order to be just, we may bring about chaos and havoc in the country. Allah does not like people who cause chaos and havoc in society,” wrote Dr Mahathir.

Instead, he said that by not applying hudud laws in Malaysia, Malaysians were truly adhering to the teachings of Islam and thus, its claim to be an Islamic country is, therefore, valid.

“There is no inconsistency in the claim that Malaysia is an Islamic state. It may not say so in the Constitution or in its name. But in its beliefs and practices it is Islamic.

“Malaysia never declared itself to be a secular state in its Constitution or anywhere else. That is because we respect all religions and their beliefs.

“Secular states ban religions. We saw this in communist countries before. But today everyone practises religious freedom and this is compatible with Islam,” Dr Mahathir concluded.

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