

# Uphold Islam, Muslims urged

Scholar: Explaining real Islamic teachings key to curbing extremism

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The ideology and actions of violent extremist groups such as Islamic State are a travesty against the teachings of Islam, said a renowned scholar of Islam.

“God teaches us to compete with one another in doing good, but what we see today is al-Qaeda and IS competing over how many people they can kill,” said Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, chairman and founder of the Cordoba Initiative.

He said Muslims must understand and help explain what an Islamic state really means to defeat the ideology of violent extremist groups.

“They call themselves Muslims and then tell us to believe what they believe or we will be killed, which is a travesty in the application of Islamic teachings,” said Feisal, who was ranked by *Time Magazine* in 2010 as one of the 100 most influen-

tial people in the world.

He was speaking at a public lecture organised by Wisma Putra’s Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations.

“Defining Islamic Statehood”, the subject of Feisal’s talk, is also the title of a book he wrote defining a modern Islamic state, which provides a quantitative measurement of how Muslim majority nations meet the definition.

The content of his book was developed through extensive debates among panels of distinguished scholars over seven years.

The Malaysian Government adopted part of his research into the country’s own Syariah Index, which Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak launched in February last year.

An Islamic state, explained Feisal,

was one that acknowledged the sovereignty of God and obtained genuine consultation and consensus from the people in choosing and legitimising its leaders.

He said an Islamic state was also one that provided justice to all under its rule and developed Maqasid Syariah (the higher purpose of syariah such as the protection of life, religion, property, the mind, family and dignity).

Feisal said some people believed an Islamic state merely meant a Muslim majority state that punished offenders using hudud or Islamic criminal laws.

He asked his audience which, between two hypothetical Muslim countries, they felt was a better Islamic state: the first imposed hudud but still had a high crime rate, while the second had little or no

serious crime problem despite not having hudud.

Nearly everyone in his audience, who comprised local and foreign diplomats as well as university students, raised their hands in support of the second example.

“A better Islamic state is not necessarily one that practises hudud but one where the people behave as God wants,” said Feisal.

He said research on defining an Islamic state should be developed further in the bigger effort to change negative perceptions on Islam.

“Nobody is saying what Islamic statehood is really all about, so of course IS commands the stage.

“This is the answer to IS. We need to counter their narrative and since Malaysia has chosen to support this effort, maybe other countries should consider doing the same.”