

# Islamic Bill controversy settled: PM

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By Spbry Sharif and Ho Kay Tat

**KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs.** — The controversy over the Selangor Islamic Bill has been resolved and no race should harbour any sense of loss, the Prime Minister said today.

**Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad** said the issue has been settled through the Barisan Nasional way but declined to disclose details of the solution.

"The settlement is through the **Barisan Nasional** way with nobody having to feel he has lost out.

"This issue is closed and there is no need for anybody to resign," he added.

When asked what the solution was, Dr Mahathir declined, saying: "Everytime I elaborate it will be **misinterpreted** and this will not solve the problem.

"In our country with many races, it is best left to a close forum to solve any racial problem rather than publicise it to everybody.

"Unless you like racial anarrels: then you try to **solve the problem** through public debate and that is the worst thing that can happen."

Dr Mahathir, who is also Barisan Nasional chairman, **gave an assurance** that the matter had been settled in a way amicable to both the Muslims and non-Muslims.

"The non-Muslims don't have to worry over the **implications** of the Bill while **Muslims don't** have to think that their demands are not met," he said after meeting about BOO Umno local **councillors** at the Putra World Trade Centre.

Dr Mahathir added that he has met all Menteri **Besar** and Chief Ministers and they agreed with the solution.

The Prime Minister said Malaysians must accept that in a multi-racial

country "we cannot satisfy all and we must accept this as a fact of life".

"Unless we want to be like Lebanon where nothing satisfies the Shi'ite Muslims, and the Christian Druze . . . in the end everybody suffers.

"We have to be **grateful** that we don't have this kind of situation."

Dr Mahathir appealed to the Press not to publicise **such** issues in future.

"Why pick up minor racial differences when there are many **other** issues the Press can highlight which are related to the **well-being** of the country."

He also told the Press that the country was peaceful and prosperous with everyone able to benefit from development.

"If we focus on sensitive racial matters, neither the Malaya, Chinese nor Indians will benefit," Dr Mahathir said.

The **Selangor State Assembly** passed the Islamic Administration **Enactment Bill 1989** on July 19 whose provisions, amongst others, allow non-Muslim minors to **embrace** Islam once they reached the age of maturity according to Syariah law.

The age for maturity for boys is 15 while girls are considered to have come of age when they have their first menstrual period.

Several groups have claimed the Bill could contradict article 12 (4) of the Federal constitution which states that the religion of a person under 18 years of age shall be decided by their parents.

The issue has led to eight Selangor MCA Assemblymen offering their resignation for supporting the Bill. Three MIC Assemblymen who also support the Bill had explained their action to the party.