

# Fear not, Chinese told

They will not lose their rights in an Islamic Malaysia, Mahathir promises

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**KUALA LUMPUR, Sat:** Chinese Malaysians were reassured tonight that they will not lose their rights in an Islamic Malaysia.

"We have no wish to obstruct or to curtail your rights in this country. Your rights will be your rights. That is Malaysia," Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The government had to declare Malaysia an Islamic state because the opposition party PAS keeps harping on having Islamic state. Mahathir told the large gathering of influential Chinese Malaysians at a dinner hosted by the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia (ACCCIM).

"An Islamic state doesn't mean that there is no place, no freedom for those who are non-Muslims," he said. "We are not changing anything ... we are not amending the Constitution."

Mahathir said the Chinese have been living in this country long before independence 44 years ago and while they may not know, they are in fact living in an Islamic state.

"You (the Chinese community) have not suffered because of that, you have not seen any discrimination or oppression or any action against you because you are non-Muslim.

"You have lived and done busi-

ness in this country and prospered, while all along Malaysia has been an Islamic state," he said.

"It is all right for you to think that this is a secular country because we don't have any obstructions to anything you want to do, within the laws of the nation.

"I do hope the Chinese community will not go around saying the government is going to do something that will deprive the Chinese of their rights," he said.

This is not at all true as the government has worked with the Chinese community all this while and the Chinese have always been represented in the government.

"So please do not listen to some people who want to make an issue out of it (Islamic state). We want the Opposition to say what it wants to do when it has an Islamic state."

The Opposition, he said, is afraid to say exactly what kind of Islam it wants in Malaysia, because if it does, then the non-Muslims will not vote for it.

"They are trying to cheat the non-Muslims. I suspect that the Islamic state they want will be like the Taliban, where women have to cover up from head to toe, are denied education and where the non-Muslims will be discriminated."

Among those present were ACCCIM president Tan Sri Lim Guan Teik, MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik and several other government leaders.