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'Use **surau** for other activities'

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Dr M: If folks feel strongly about demolishing it, then look into it

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KUALA LUMPUR: The surau in Tanjung Sedili Besar, which had been used by a Buddhist group to meditate, can be used for other purposes rather than having it torn down, said Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"The building can still be used for other activities but if the people in the area feel strongly about having it demolished, then the authorities should look into it," the former prime minister told reporters after hosting his annual Hari Raya open house. The event was attended by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, his deputy Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and their wives Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor and Puan Seri Norainee Abdul Rahman.

Dr Mahathir, however, said the Government did the right thing in revoking the Singaporean resort operator's permanent resident status, adding that it was not a harsh move because he had failed to respect the country's policies and take into account religious sensitivities of the people.

"The Government has the right to give (PR status) and has the right to revoke it if one does not follow the law. Whether you are a citizen or a permanent resident, you must abide by the laws of the country," he said.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi had said that the 45-year-old Singaporean Muslim's PR status was revoked following an outrage among the community in Tanjung Sedili Besar after the incident.

The owner had allowed the Buddhist group to use the surau to meditate and a visitor to the resort, who wanted to perform Asar prayers,



Snap me for a video on Dr Mahathir's open house



Warm welcome: Dr Mahathir welcoming Najib to his residence at The Mines in Seri Kembangan as Dr Siti Hasmah and Rosmah look on.

stumbled upon the group.

The Johor state government, under the advice of the Johor Islamic Affairs Council, had decided to demolish the surau since it had hosted other religious activities.

The crowd at Dr Mahathir's open house this year was much larger than that in the previous years, forcing the former prime minister and

his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali to decline requests from the crowd to pose for pictures with them.

"We are deeply sorry that guests could not have photographs taken with us. If we allow this, people will have to stand in line under the hot sun longer. I hope the people will understand," said Dr Mahathir.