

**Respect Constitution, interfaith council tells hudud advocates**  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 12 — The national non-Muslim interfaith council reminded hudud proponents today to respect non-Muslim rights and abide by the spirit of the Constitution when discussing the controversial Islamic law.

The Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) said enacting hudud law would go against the Federal Constitution, which grants only limited jurisdiction to syariah courts.

It pointed out that while this jurisdiction extended to matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption and guardianship, syariah courts had no power over criminal matters like murder, rape, theft, robbery, unnatural sex or incest.

"Most of these are also prohibited by hudud, but since they are included in the federal list, the syariah courts have no jurisdiction over them," the council said in a statement today.

"If syariah courts were also to be given jurisdiction over these criminal offences, then this would create a parallel system which is against the general structure of the Constitution."

MCCBCHST also said the argument that hudud should be allowed if a majority of Malaysians were in favour of it was "fallacious" as the Constitution cannot be overthrown by popular opinion alone.

It warned that the fundamental rights guaranteed in the Constitution cannot be changed by the majority and even a single citizen is entitled to challenge and uphold the rights enshrined in the document.

All religions must respect the sensitivities and rights of other religious communities and strive for peace and harmony, the council added.

"Any changes to be done must be done in accordance with and not in disregard of our Constitution," it concluded.

PAS has drawn flak from friend and foe alike over plans to enact hudud in Kelantan, with DAP central committee members threatening to quit their posts if the Islamist party implements the law, which prescribes punishments like stoning, amputation and flogging.

PAS, which has issued an assurance that any introduction of hudud will be done slowly and in phases, recently kicked off a series of talks in Kelantan to explain the controversial Islamic law to Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

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