

**Dr M: Don't exploit religion**  
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**By Yow Hong Chieh**

SERI KEMBANGAN, Dec 13 — Malaysians should refrain from playing up religious issues in public as this can lead to "very serious quarrels", Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"I really don't know about this but I hope that these religious matters are left out. Jangan kacaulah (Leave it be).

"I don't like this bringing in of either Islam or Christianity or whatever religion into our relations with each other," he told reporters at the Palace of the Golden Horses here.

The former prime minister was responding to a report in the New York Times in which Christians here claimed that they are being used as "pawns" to win the Muslim vote in the next general election.

"The present climate and mood is more political than anything else," Rev Lawrence Andrew, editor of Catholic weekly The Herald, told the US daily.

"They are thinking that it will unite the Muslims together, but I don't think that any Malaysians buy it. It's a political game."

Dr Mahathir pointed out that Malaysians followed many different creeds and any attempt to exploit religious differences would have undesirable consequences.

"We are followers of different religions and when you have religious quarrels, it can be very, very serious. So let's not hear about such attempts," he said.

Tension between Muslims and Christians has been escalating ever since state Islamic religious officials raided a Petaling Jaya church in August alleging attempts to convert Muslims there.

Ruling Malay party Umno also claimed that the opposition DAP is an "agent of Christianisation" with plans to install a Christian prime minister.

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