

**Dr M chews out MCA over quit threat**  
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SEREMBAN, Sept 24 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad chided MCA today for lacking the Barisan Nasional (BN) spirit, after the party threatened to quit the coalition if Umno pushes for the implementation of hudud law.

The country's longest-serving prime minister said the Chinese party was handing political foes DAP with ammunition ahead of an expected general election, saying that an MCA exit would fracture BN to the benefit of the opposition.

"We did not say we would or not (implement hudud). We didn't say anything," the former prime minister was quoted saying in a Bernama Online report today.

"There was no call for them to make the statement."

Dr Chua made the threat yesterday following Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin's statement that said Umno was also in support of the hudud law. Gerakan later expressed similar intent.

Muhyiddin later said Dr Chua had made his warning without fully comprehending Umno's stand on hudud.

The Umno deputy president explained that his party has always been clear that it supports hudud in principle, but could not enact the Islamic laws as Malaysia was not ready for them yet.

But the remarks were at odds with those made by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak today, who pledged that his administration would block any attempt to implement the Islamic penal law, in a bid to curtail further debate on the fractious subject.

Hudud is a prickly subject in multicultural Malaysia where race and religion are closely-linked. The country's 28-million population is also still haunted by the bloody racial riots of May 13, 1969.

The issue is raised cyclically as political fodder as its divisive nature often causes conflicts to occur within otherwise-friendly circles, making it ideal to pit parties with opposing ideologies against one another.

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