

**Kedah MCA backs hudud, tells DAP to stop opposing
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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 21 — Kedah MCA has pledged its support for the enforcement of hudud law for Muslims, a Malay daily reported today, in a sudden turn of events that appears to suggest Barisan Nasional's (BN) Chinese party is under pressure to soften its opposition to the Islamic penal code for the crucial Malay-Muslim vote ahead of elections.

Kedah MCA chairman Datuk Chong Itt Chew was reported by Sinar Harian as saying that the reason for its reversal was simply because hudud law would not affect non-Muslims.

"If the implementation of the law brings benefits to the people and the country, it will not be a problem including to non-Muslims.

"DAP should also not object," he was quoted as saying by the paper, referring to the MCA's long-time political foe that has repeatedly made clear it is opposed to hudud law being enforced as Malaysia is not an Islamic theocracy.

Chong was reported telling the DAP's ally PAS to reconsider its role in the Pakatan Rakyat (PR) opposition pact.

"PAS must make the decision to leave PR. As long as it is with PR, PAS will never succeed in implementing hudud law," the MCA man was quoted as saying.

He was reported saying that Kedah MCA would support the Islamist party if it wished to work together with Umno, the ruling federal coalition's Malay party and the BN's mainstay.

The MCA is an opposition party in Kedah, which is currently governed by the PR bloc after it won in the 2008 general election.

"I see the alliance of Umno and PAS as the best course of action for the future of the people and the country," Chong was quoted as saying.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, a former Umno president and prime minister who still wields great influence, has said that PAS could realise its goal to set up an Islamic state and carry out hudud if it joined Umno in a bid to woo the Islamist party to the BN's side.

His remarks came in the wake of a recent controversy after religious conservatives, including the state muftis of Pahang and Perak, dubbed the DAP "kafir harbi" or belligerent infidels for its consistent opposition to hudud, dragging PAS and PKR into a heated debate.

The controversy prompted PAS president Datuk Seri Hadi Awang to rise to its ally's defence, pointing out that while the DAP opposed hudud, Umno had already rejected its implementation.

However, the MCA at the federal level has also persistently maintained it is opposed to hudud law.

Just last week, the party's deputy publicity chief Loh Seng Kok told the DAP to stop being "subservient to PAS", urging the opposition party's leaders, father-and-son Lim Kit Siang and Lim Guan Eng, to "use their influence to urge other Pakatan leaders to issue a joint statement saying that PAS has abandoned its theocratic state and hudud law agenda."

Sinar Harian had published the report titled "MCA Kedah sokong hudud" (Kedah MCA supports hudud) on the front page of its print edition today.

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