

**Dr M: MCA did not object to 'Islamic country' declaration**  
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**By Zurairi AR**

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 23 — MCA never objected when Malaysia was declared an "Islamic country", former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad told reporters today.

His remarks today come amid debate over the status of the Federal Constitution. De facto law minister Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz told Parliament yesterday that Malaysia had no secularist roots.

On September 29, 2001 the nation's fourth PM unilaterally declared Malaysia as an Islamic country in a political speech at the Gerakan party's national delegates conference.

Dr Mahathir had appeared to contradict the secular pronouncements made by his predecessors, including Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra and Tun Hussein Onn, by saying: "Umno wishes to state loudly that Malaysia is an Islamic country. This is based on the opinion of ulamas who had clarified what constituted as Islamic country .... If Malaysia is not an Islamic country because it does not implement the hudud, then there are no Islamic countries in the world."

Dr Mahathir also claimed today that Malaysia is "by definition" a Muslim country since it is acknowledged as such by the Muslim world.

"We don't care about what these people say in order to make it a political issue," he added, referring to the ongoing debate.

The former PM also expressed his disappointment that the hudud issue was being politicised by those who are pushing for its implementation.

"(This kind of) hudud, which is used for politics, is not exactly hudud," he stressed. "It is hudud used to give victory over one side.

"Pity the Muslim. If he steals, his hand will be chopped off. But his (non-Muslim) friend who steals together with him will only get two months in jail. Is that fair? That is not Islam."

He was also not pleased that those who support hudud are seen as more Islamic than those who do not support it.

"These issues are meant to scare the Chinese community to not support DAP," Dr Mahathir said, referring to MCA's recent attacks on hudud.

MCA had previously warned that Muslim MPs would unite to amend the Federal Constitution in favour of hudud and the Islamic state if PR takes over, but DAP's Lim Kit Siang had dismissed it as a "lie" to deter the Chinese community from voting for the opposition.

MCA also had repeatedly used the issue in its bid to drive a wedge between PAS and DAP, two parties in the PR federal opposition pact.

PAS has expressed its support for the implementation of hudud law, but DAP has said that it can only be done in an "Islamic state", pointing out that the Federal Constitution states that Malaysia is a secular country.

BN has often pointed to the differing views of PAS and DAP on hudud as proof that PR is not united.

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