

Revoking PR is government's right but why demolish surau, says Dr Mahathir
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There is nothing harsh about revoking the permanent resident status of the Singaporean resort owner who allowed a group of Buddhists to use the surau for meditation.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (pic) said he did not find it harsh to revoke the PR status but instead said he found no reason why the surau should be demolished.

"The government reserves the right to do so," he said at his Hari Raya open house in Seri Kembangan today, referring to the revoking of the PR status.

"But the demolishing of the surau is different. However, people in the area demanded that the surau be demolished, so it is better to comply with their wishes."

The Johor state government, under the advice of the Johor Islamic Affairs Council (MAIJ) had decided to demolish the surau since it had hosted other religious activities.

MAIJ adviser Noh Gadut had told newswire Bernama that the building can be torn down based on Surat at-Taubah verse 107 of the Quran.

He said that the surau was not built towards the qiblat (direction of prayer for Muslims) and is "300 kilometres off" the direction of the holy grounds in Mecca.

The authorities had arrested the 45-year-old Singaporean resort operator after a video clip of Buddhists meditating in the surau was circulated on the Internet.

The operator had earlier defended his action, saying that he did not think allowing believers of other religions to use the surau was wrong.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi announced yesterday that the man's permanent resident status was revoked in accordance with provisions of the law as the resort operator was "insensitive to Muslims and Islam".

Several lawyers said Putrajaya had "prematurely punished" the Singaporean with its decision to strip him of his PR status.

They said although Ahmad Zahid has the power to revoke the man's PR status, he should have given him a chance to explain himself. - August 18, 2013.

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