

**Malaysia truly 'Islamic' without hudud, Dr M says**  
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KUALA LUMPUR, July 4 — Malaysia is a true Islamic state even if not explicitly stated in the country's constitution and despite the absence of hudud enforcement, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Amid a simmering debate on the country's religious nationhood — or lack thereof — the former prime minister argued that proponents of secularism were wrong because Malaysia's claim to an Islamic state was validated by its beliefs and practices.

"In not applying hudud laws in Malaysia we are truly adhering to the teachings of Islam. Our claim to be an Islamic country is therefore valid.

"There is no inconsistency in the claim that Malaysia is an Islamic state. It may not say so in the constitution or in its name. But in its beliefs and practices it is Islamic," the 88-year-old wrote on his chedet blog.

Dr Mahathir, who held office for 22 years, has been under fire from critics who claimed his anti-hudud stand and recent pronouncements on Malaysia's status contradicted his previous declaration of the country as an Islamic state.

But the Kedah-born argued that he has been consistent over the years in his comments on the subject.

"Secular states ban religions. We saw this in Communist countries before. But today everyone practises religious freedom and this is compatible with Islam," he said.

He reiterated that hudud would bring "chaos and havoc" if implemented in Malaysia's multi-religious, multiracial society because Islam prioritises justice above everything else.

"Justice is very important in Islam. There are 43 verses which enjoin upon Muslims to 'judge with justice'. There is no injunction to do justice only to Muslims and not to the non-Muslims. Certainly there is nothing in the shariah enjoining injustice for Muslims," Dr Mahathir wrote.

He also stressed that the federal government is not rejecting hudud laws by not implementing it, but the decision is made because it wants to uphold justice.

"Other than this, Islam is the official religion of Malaysia and we do not obstruct Muslims from practising the teachings of Islam," he said.

Malay-Muslim activists in support of hudud have argued the enforcement of the Islamic penal code that prescribed amputations and death by stoning for robbery, apostasy and adultery among a list of crimes, is in line with Article 3 in the Federal Constitution, which states that Islam is the religion of the federation.

Opponents argue, however, that hudud cannot be carried out in Malaysia as Islamic law is applicable only on Muslims and if enforced, would run counter to other fundamental provisions in the constitution, namely Article 8, which prescribes equality before the law for all, regardless of their religious beliefs.

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