



16 AUG, 2026

Conversion need not mean name change

Daily Express (KK), Malaysia



Page 1 of 2

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON MULTI-FAITH PARTNERSHIP

Conversion need not mean name change



Sherell Jeffrey

KOTA KINABALU: Malaysian Chinese Muslim Association (MACMA) President Prof Datuk Dr Taufiq Yap Yun Hin (**pic**) said he had faced questions over whether using chopsticks made him less Muslim.

"People have also questioned whether keeping a Chinese name made me less of a Muslim," he said at the Roundtable Discussion on Multi-Faith Partnership for Human Dignity and Flourishing, here, recently.

He said there was no historical requirement for converts to change their names, pointing out that the practice appears to be a Malaysian phenomenon rather than a religious one.

"I do not have to make my eyes big to be a Muslim. I am proud to be a Chinese with smaller eyes," said Taufiq, who was among the invited panellists at the Roundtable Discussion 1: A Multi-Faith Vision of Human Dignity and Flourishing for the Future.

Taufiq, who served as Universiti Malaysia Sabah Vice Chancellor from 2019 to 2022, said this allowed him to remain proudly Chinese, faithfully Muslim and fully Malaysian.

"Human dignity in Islam is granted to every person regardless of race, wealth or

cultural background. Islamic teaching holds dignity to be universal and not determined by status.

"The greatest challenge to multi-faith harmony is not religious diversity itself but persistent misunderstanding and stereotypes between communities," he said.

He said diversity exists so that people come to know one another rather than compete or divide, pointing out that Islam does not view cultural differences as an obstacle to unity but as an opportunity for mutual learning.

"The Chinese Muslim community, known as Hui in China, developed a civilisation that blended Islamic values with Chinese traditions such as respect for elders and social harmony," he said.

He cited Cheng Ho, or Zheng He, as an example of someone whose faith and cultural identity coexisted, noting his (Cheng Ho) contributions to mosque architecture in Melaka and voyages through Java, Palembang and Aceh.

He said Malaysian Chinese Muslims celebrate occasions such as Chinese New Year and Duan Wu Jie and that dishes such as Yee Sang are part of Malaysian Chinese culture rather than an import from China.

"Islamic jurisprudence recognises local custom as part of social life so long as it does not conflict with core religious principles.

"There are four barriers to interfaith understanding among Malaysians, namely limited religious literacy, insufficient meaningful contact between neighbours of different faiths, fear that engaging with other faiths would weaken one's own religious identity, and the politicisation of race and religion.

"Trust is built through relationship, not through proximity," he said, pointing out that many Malaysians live side by side with neighbours of other faiths for decades without ever building genuine friendships.

He spoke about the RUTACC principle, which stands for respect, understanding, tolerance, acceptance and celebration, followed by appreciating differences as a source of strength.

"Wishing others well during their festivals, including Chinese New Year and Deepavali, is an acceptable practice," he said.

He said MACMA would continue to act as a bridge between Muslims and non-Muslims so that greater mutual understanding can be built between communities.



16 AUG, 2026

Conversion need not mean name change

Daily Express (KK), Malaysia



SUMMARIES

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON MULTI-FAITH PARTNERSHIP

Sherell Jeffrey KOTA KINABALU: Malaysian Chinese Muslim Association (MACMA) President Prof Datuk Dr Taufiq Yap Yun Hin (pic) said he had faced questions over whether using chopsticks made him less Muslim. “People have also questioned whether keeping a Chinese name made me less of a Muslim,” he said at the Roundtable Discussion on Multi-Faith Partnership for Human Dignity and Flourishing, here, recently.