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'Pas-issued fatwa violate the laws'

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PETALING JAYA, Mon. - Several fatwa issued by Pas were against the State Islamic Legislation and Administration Enactment, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman said today.

He said according to the enactment, fatwa (religious rulings) must be issued by the national fatwa committee following the order from the State rulers.

"This is because when a matter involving the people's akidah (beliefs) is raised by certain parties, the State rulers will direct the national fatwa committee to convene a meeting and issue a fatwa.

"So when Pas or certain people issue fatwa that involve one's akidah, such as one will go to heaven if one votes for Pas, it is violating the State legislation and goes against the rights of the rulers," he told reporters before sending off the first batch of 337 haj pilgrims at Tabung Haji complex in Kelana Jaya today.

Abdul Hamid was asked to comment on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement last Saturday that Umno would prove that fatwa issued by Pas were contrary to Islamic teachings and that the party (Umno) was now gathering information.

The pilgrims left for Jeddah at 10.15am from Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah International Airport, Subang.

"This is a major issue, not only involving Umno, but also the State rulers' sovereignty in issuing fatwa in the country," he said.

On Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat saying that he was ready to face Umno to discuss Umno's allegations that fatwa issued by Pas was against Islam, Abdul Hamid said: "This is not an Umno issue but a national fatwa issue and Umno will be the witness.

"But we are definitely ready to discuss it with Pas."

Abdul Hamid alluded to the tragic Memali incident, the nation's most violent clash with radical Islam, which took place in Kedah on Feb 25, 1986.

In the incident, certain people issued the mati syahid (martyr's death)) fatwa resulting in followers willing to shoot the police to uphold their beliefs.

Earlier, Abdul Hamid advised pilgrims for the current haj season not to make last minute cancellations without valid reasons to avoid either being fined RM1,000, having half the fare forfeited if the trip is cancelled 10 days before departure or having the full fare forfeited if the trip is cancelled 48 hours before departure.

"We're hoping cancellations will not recur. Those making last minute cancellations will lose as Tabung Haji has decided not to refund them."

He added that Tabung Haji lost at least RM2.4 million between 1998 and last year due to last-minute cancellations.

Abdul Hamid said 12 Malaysian immigration officers would be stationed at Jeddah and Medina gateways to track down Malaysians going through illegal tour agencies to enter Saudi Arabia to perform their haj.

"These officers would check for those using red international passports and not the special green haj passport," he said.

Offenders will also face action by the Immigration Department.

Malaysian carrier AirAsia and its Saudi Arabia counterpart Saudi Air are operating the haj flights.

The last batch is scheduled to leave on March 9.

(END)