

Be sensitive to people's religious sentiments
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Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Jamil Khir Baharom said today non-Muslims including politicians were not prohibited from entering mosques but they should observe decorum such as donning proper attire.

He said a politician who understood public perception of issues of a religious nature should not resort to action which could hurt the religious feelings of the people or repeat such action.

Jamil Khir was asked to comment on the alleged tight-fitting clothes worn by Serdang MP Teo Nie Ching during an aerobics exercise session in the compound of the Taman Cheras Jaya Mosque in Balakong, Selangor, recently.

"It is not wrong (for non-Muslims) to enter mosques but they have to observe decorum. I see a repeat of the incident, as though ignoring the feelings of other people, particularly Muslims and mosque authorities.

"Past experience has been ignored as a reminder to act accordingly," he told reporters after flagging off the Federal Territory "1Malaysia 1Ummah" Hijrah Run in Kuala Lumpur.

Teo had raised controversy in August when she delivered a talk at a surau in Kajang.

Jamil Khir said non-Muslims were allowed to enter mosques, and that was why the National Mosque, Federal Territory Mosque and the Tuanku Mizan Mosque made available robes and scarves to be donned by them when they entered the premises.

He also commented on a statement by PAS Spiritual Leader Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat that Islam did not prohibit activities, including aerobics, in mosque compounds so long as they did not contravene Syariah principles.

"Agreed, but when we enter a mosque it is to get closer to Islam. We understand Islam better. But what is happening is the opposite. In getting closer, there is less understanding and more of hurting the feelings of others," said Jamil Khir.

He also said that the Selangor Islamic Religious Affairs Department (Jais) would provide an explanation with regard to the incident to help ease the discomfort among Muslims in the matter.

- Bernama

