

Christians who met Najib were 'victimised'

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Criticising the outcome of yesterday's meeting between Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak and Christian groups, Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said the Christians at the meeting had been 'victimised'.

Lim questioned why the group comprising clergies from various denominations were "put in the dock" and made to explain their stand on the state of the country's official religion, Islam.

Why did they have to explain themselves when they had never questioned the official religion of the country in the first place?" he asked at a press conference at Komtar today.

"No Christian has ever questioned Islam and no Christian has even wanted to install a Christian prime minister," Lim added.

Najib said after the meeting over lunch at his office in Putrajaya yesterday that the Christian leaders pledged to respect the position of Islam as official religion and had no intention of challenging the provision enshrined in the Federal Constitution.

The prime minister also said the Christians gave their undertaking to cooperate in nurturing peace and harmony among the various faiths so that Malaysia would continue to be a peaceful and prosperous nation.

Lim, who is DAP secretary-general, said it was Najib who needed to explain the May 7 front page report in Utusan Malaysia that DAP was colluding with a group of pastors to set up a Christian state.

The baseless report was taken from two pro-Umno blogs and had caused havoc across the country, with several police reports lodged against the DAP and the pastors.

'Najib did not even apologise'

The Malay daily, which is largely owned by Umno, whose president is Najib, had said the DAP and the pastors were 'conspiring' to amend the official religion of Islam and replace it with Christianity.

"But Najib did not even apologise. Utusan was wrong and played a very dangerous political game to divide the people to get more support (for Umno)," Lim said.

Lim, who is Bagan MP, was also upset that Utusan had been let off with a mere slap on the wrist from the Home Ministry, which said yesterday that it had cautioned the newspaper's editor-in-chief.

"It is like penalising the victim and allowing the criminal to get off scot free," Lim said. "Why is it that those who make false allegations do not have to explain and apologise?"

"If this is the kind of treatment given, they (Utusan Malaysia) will do it again... it is an obvious act of discrimination."

If the matter involved other newspapers, their editors would have been suspended for two weeks at least, said Lim, who referred to the two-week suspension of a China Press editor over a report that former Inspector-General of Police Musa Hassan had resigned from his post.

"It's unequal treatment... if the newspaper had done wrong, it should apologise," Lim insisted, saying Utusan "almost burned the whole country, was caught in the act, yet no firm action was taken".

Calling it a "clear travesty of justice", Lim added that the Home Ministry's leniency towards Utusan

Malaysia was a clear indication of the conspiracy between Umno and its newspaper to cause racial and religious tensions in the country and destroy DAP's reputation.

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