

Don: Even the palace is subject to criticism
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Constitutional law expert Abdul Aziz Bari says the Malay Rulers, like public institutions, are subject to public scrutiny and this does not amount to being disrespectful to them.

Ratepayers have every right to evaluate the ruler's performance and the exercising of their constitutional powers, the International Islamic University law lecturer said.

NONE"From the Islamic point of view, one would find an even more rigorous standard, where one man stood up and reminded Caliph Umar that he would correct him by his sword.

"Under the Sedition Act 1948, it is fine to criticise the rulers so long as it does not advocate the abolition of the institution (of monarchy)," Aziz said in a statement to Malaysiakini.

He was responding to a front-page report by Utusan Malaysia today, which claimed that his comments which appeared in the Bahasa Malaysia version of Malaysiakini yesterday, were disrespectful to the Selangor sultan.

The point of contention is Aziz's comment that the Selangor sultan's intervention in the Selangor Islamic Affairs Department (Jais) raid on church premises was "unconventional".

The Utusan report also quotes Aziz saying that the sultan, as the head of Islam in Selangor, has the right to do but his decrees must be in line with Islam and consistent.

Expert on role of monarchy

Aziz said he has published various books and papers that take a critical look at the role and powers of the Malaysian monarchy.

This includes his 1996 PhD thesis *The Development and Role of Constitutional Monarchy in Malaysia* and his 2002 book *Majlis Raja-raja: Kedudukannya dalam Perlembagaan*, which was launched by the Agong then.

Apart from his, Aziz said, he had taken a more critical line following the Perak constitutional crisis in 2009.

"I just think that some of the rulers have crossed the line. They have turned their back on the constitution.

"While some of them may say they are just doing what is allowed by the constitution, I would say they should not take the provisions literally and out of context."

On Monday, Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah had decreed that Jais had found indications that there were attempts to subvert the faith of Muslims present at an Aug 3 function at the Damansara Utama Methodist Church hall.

However, action could not be taken because of insufficient evidence.

The sultan said non-Muslims should not spread their beliefs to Muslims, as stipulated in Article 11 of the federal constitution and the Selangor non-Islamic Religions (Control of Propagation Amongst Muslims) Enactment 1988.

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