

Unity minister wants Himpun to be 'responsible'
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By Hafiz Yatim

Those attending the Himpun rally on Saturday at the Shah Alam stadium have been advised to behave responsibly and not do or say anything that could affect national security.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Koh Tsu Koon, who is in charge of national unity, noted that the police have issued a permit for the event, and that it is a gathering, not a street demonstration.

"While we encourage freedom of expression and religion, you should do it responsibly," he said.

"The people have to recognise the multi-religious and multi-racial nature of the Malaysian community. Hence, hold the gathering responsibly (and) express (what you have to say) in a positive and in a moderate manner."

Koh also urged caution in order to prevent untoward incidents or statements.

The Gathering of a Million Faithful, as it is dubbed, is being organised to "preserve the sanctity of Islam".

He was asked to comment on the Saturday gathering amid fears that it may disrupt unity and possible create unrest.

Koh told this to reporters after giving away prizes to the national patriotic song secondary school competition.

Organisers of the rally said they are apolitical, and Perak mufti Harussani Zakaria will be one of the speaker.

Koh hoped the gathering will not be unruly with two groups contesting or going against each other.

"I hope the gathering will be held responsibly to uphold Rukunegara and 1Malaysia as they have to be moderate. I hope it would turn out all right and would promote understanding," he said.

"In a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society they may have different concerns. But as long as they voice it in a positive and moderate manner then it is actually their right of expression. Any group, I am not talking about this group but any ethnic group when they want to talk about or express their views, must take into account the multi-ethnic and multi-religious nature of our society."

Earlier, he said efforts to promote integration in schools would be intensified with the formation of Rukunegara club in schools nationwide.

He said at present there are 4,811 Rukunegara clubs in school and within a period of three years this has accounted for about half the number of schools nationwide.

"It can promote unity and integration by doing various co-curriculum activities. One of the conditions in this choir competition is that it must comprise of various races. It would help promote friendship and unity in the long run," he said.

No comment about Lim's son

Koh, when asked to comment about allegations made by some blogs over Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng's teenage son, the minister said he does not want to comment on what is stated in blogs as there is no basis to judge.

"There are so many things in the blogs and (we cannot verify them). Just look at when they put my cycling all over the place. It is creative so I just laugh about it. It may create tension or falsification, I do not know," he said.

"Whoever says whatever, show the evidence and whoever wants to refute, do so. It's part of the reality of cyberspace nowadays," he said.

Koh also refused to answer on the hypothetical situation if the allegations were about his own children, saying it was not fair to speculate on other people's children.

"I just hope that it is not a case of unnecessary victimisation and I feel that in politics there must be ethics on both sides. That is why I do not want to comment on this issue," he stressed.

Allegations on pro-Umno blogs suggest that Lim's son had moved to another school as a result of a molest accusation, which the Penang chief minister had firmly denied.

DAP politicians today said the blogs had used a fake photo to tarnish Lim's son.

Lim had also attacked the pro-Umno blogs, accusing them of trying to wreck his teenage son's life and describe such acts as "morally despicable and barbaric" lies.