

MCA chief: Queer fest okay if 'low-profile'
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by Koh Jun Lin

The recently banned Seksualiti Merdeka festival should have been kept a "low-profile" event, says MCA president Dr Chua Soi Lek.

Sexual preferences, he said, are a personal matter, like religion, and people are entitled to their opinion as long as no one is harmed.

"If they want to hold this in a very low-profile manner, I see no reason why not.

"But if they do it as a festival that runs for days, then it may provoke people who may not agree with it," Chua (left) told reporters at the MCA headquarters today.

Commenting further, he stressed, "the voices of the majority should be heard, but the voices of the minority should also be respected."

Seksualiti Merdeka is an annual festival which began in 2008. The festival involves talks, workshops and film screenings on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual (LGBT) issues.

However, this year's festival, slated to start tomorrow until Nov 13, attracted protests from various groups, citing social, moral and religious concerns.

Police have banned the event last Friday and questioned several individuals connected to it.

Don't attract retaliation

On another development, Chua said there should be mutual respect for religious sensitivities in this country, when asked on Malaysian Consultative Council for Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taosim's (MCCBCHST) calls to prevent the slaughter of cattle in schools and other public venues.

Chua clarified that he was unfamiliar with the issue but stressed that said, "there must be a mutual respect and a give and take attitude, and then we can live harmoniously."

He was concerned that barring the slaughter of cattle at schools would also prompt similar restrictions from Muslims on festivals of other religions.

"If you stick (such) rules, in this case, there will be a lot of problems."

MCCBCHST made the statement on Saturday, expressing concerns that the sacrificial slaughter is inappropriate for the school's multi-religious student population, especially Hindus who consider cows sacred.

The statement had drawn condemnation from Muslim NGOs and Perlis mufti Juanda Jaya, telling MCCBCHST to be tolerant and not to interfere with the affairs of other faiths.

The ritual is usually done on mosque grounds, but there had been plans for it to be held at least two schools.

Malaysiakini understand that the scheduled rituals have been cancelled due to inadequate facilities.

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