

## **'Jais criticism faced backlash from PAS allies'**

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Selangor PAS lawmaker Saari Sungib says he has been critical of the Selangor Islamic Religious Department (Jais), but faced backlash as a result, including from his colleagues.

"When I was in the (state) assembly, I was quite critical of Jais and I was always reminded, 'YB, if you want to comment do it behind closed doors. Don't comment openly.'

"So this is the tradition - the belief that once you are the bastion of Islam, you cannot be questioned. You are protected by the authorities.

"Whenever I put a motion to debate about Jais, I was reprimanded. I was criticised," said the Hulu Kelang assemblyperson.

As an example, Saari (left) said he had proposed an emergency motion to debate Jais' controversial arrest of former Perlis mufti Asri Zainal Abidin in 2009 for giving religious talks without tauliah (authorisation) at his home.

However, the motion was rejected by the then speaker Teng Chang Khim. Saari said the reason given was that it was against the wishes of the sultan, whereas reports of the time quoted Teng saying that the matter was not urgent enough.

He added that Jais' interpretation of Islam is increasingly narrow and this is being echoed by Umno, and he expressed hope that PAS would not follow suit.

Saari was speaking while officiating the launch of two books yesterday, 'Contemporary Islamic Discourse in the Malay-Indonesian World' by National University of Singapore visiting fellow Azhar Ibrahim, and 'Wacana Pemikiran Reformis (The Discourse of Reformist Thought)' by Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF) chairperson Ahmad Farouk Musa.

In his speech, he quipped that he is likely to receive backlash from his party for officiating the launch of the two books filled with progressive ideas, as well.

"As I have learned, any PAS leader who participated in IRF events - commenting and writing prefaces to a book - will have a difficult time in PAS, from the PAS

members.

"I think my turn will come next week," he said, drawing laughter from the audience of about 30 people.

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