

Quizzed on Memali twist, minister turns to religion
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PARLIAMENT "Islamic teachings bar people from shaming others".

This was the gist of Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Shahidan Kassim's lengthy reply when asked on former deputy prime minister Musa Hitam's revelation on the bloody Memali incident in 1985.

"If one is a former deputy prime minister, one would know the risks... If one contravenes the Official Secrets Act...

"Morally, in Islam, the Prophet Muhammad said that those who do not expose his brethren's source of shame will not be shamed by Allah in the afterlife.

"No matter how great you are, you must avoid shaming anyone, or slandering them or badmouthing them," he said during Question Time.

He was responding to Hanipa Maidin (PAS-Sepang) who asked in a supplementary question if what was exposed by Musa is also considered an information leak.

However, neither Hanipa nor Shahidan mentioned Musa or then prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad's names but only their positions in government in 1985.

Although he made note of the Official Secrets Act, Shahidan also did not clearly state if Musa's revelation that Mahathir was in the country on Nov 19, 1985 is considered an official secret.

Musa last week revealed that he was not acting prime minister during the incident, which saw 14 civilians and four policemen killed in a village in Kedah.

The former DPM said that on the day of the incident he and the acting police chief had met with Mahathir to brief the PM and urge Mahathir not to go to China.

Musa has long been blamed for the incident, as he was Home Minister and reportedly acting prime minister then.

'Most humane country'

Meanwhile, replying to a separate question, Shahidan said that Malaysia is the "most humane country" when it comes to illegal migrants and refugees.

He said this is because Malaysia pays for the full airfare of all migrants it deports, and does not even seek half of the fare from countries of origins.

Shahidan also stressed that Malaysia will not deport any asylum seekers or refugees if they face safety threats in their countries.

However, the refugees or asylum seekers must register with UNHCR to prove their status, as Malaysia does not officially recognise refugees.

He said that those with UNHCR cards will not be detained under the Immigration Act, receive 50 percent discount on medical fees at state hospitals and be given access to private education.

He said that 132,187 Myanmarese, 325 Afghans, 391 Iraqis, 1137 Somalians, 4013 Sri Lankans and 3070 from other countries registered with UNHCR in Malaysia.

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