

'BN, too, organises multi-faith prayers'
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A state cabinet member is puzzled at former chief justice Abdul Hamid Mohamad's concern over multi-faith prayers held at an event in Penang last February.

The event, a ground-breaking ceremony for a building belonging to the Penang Indian Association, involved Indians who are Muslims, Christians and Hindus.

Dr Afif Bahardin (left) said it was only right for multi-faith prayers to be held when there are people of different faiths.

"Such practises should be encouraged for the sake of unity among the different communities," said the Seberang Jaya assemblyman.

Afif pointed out that Abdul Hamid only appeared concerned with the event in Penang, but said nothing about other multi-faith prayers held in other states.

"Why doesn't Abdul Hamid raise his concerns over other multi-faith prayers, including those organised by BN and the private sector?" Afif told Malaysiakini.

"In case Abdul Hamid missed the news, former prime minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi organised multi-faith prayers in solidarity with victims and families of Malaysian Airlines MH370," Afif said.

"Last night, Malaysian Airlines also held multi-faith prayers for the victims and families of MH17. Do all these events undermine Islam? Why only fuss over an isolated event in Penang?"

The state PKR Youth chief said he was equally perplexed at Umno's Kepala Batas MP Reezal Merican Naina Merican's call for Deputy Chief Minister II P Ramasamy to explain if such multi-faith events were a norm in state government functions.

Bernamea yesterday quoted Reezal who expressed shock over the matter, saying it conflicted with the constitution which states Islam as the religion of the federation.

No enough state funding

Reezal also said this new development will result in religious pluralism, a notion rejected by some Muslims in the country.

"Human Resources and Environment Minister G Palanivel, who is also MIC president, was

also present at the event with Ramasamy," Afif said.

"Reezal should be asking his BN counterpart if such multi-faith events were part of federal government-organised functions," Afif added.

On Wednesday, Ramasamy said that such practises should be commended as it reflected the true Malaysian spirit.

Abdul Hamid had also claimed that Islam was under threat in Penang as it was difficult for Muslim groups to obtain state allocation for Islamic activities as other religious groups were also competing for funds.

Afif rubbished the former judge's claims, citing the example of the Seberang Jaya mosque in his constituency which applied for funding to upgrade the building since 1994 when the state was under BN.

"The funding never came. Last year, when the mosque committee members were replaced, we put in a new application to the state government for funding," he explained.

"Within a few months, we got an allocation of RM600,000 to upgrade the mosque and the renovations are now done," he added.

"The ex-CJ should really come to Penang to see things for himself since he is a Penangite, instead of issuing frivolous and unsubstantiated claims based on hearsay."