

Did IGP err in Sirul's case, too?

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COMMENT Inspector-general of police Khalid Abu Bakar had cleared the Taman Medan church protesters of sedition.

He also defended his brother's presence at the protest on the grounds that he was mediating between the Muslim residents and church official.

Though the protesters came armed with placards that read 'Do not challenge the Muslims of Taman Medan' and demanded that the church lower a cross on its building or they would do it themselves, the police chief viewed this as nothing more than a "flash mob".

He also believed that the protest did not touch the Christian faith, a justification which many found to be bordering on the peripheries of the bizarre.

But as Khalid attempted to close the sedition file, Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak stopped him from doing so.

The IGP was left red-faced. And this was not the first time.

Former police chief Musa Hassan also disagreed with Khalid's handling of the matter and called on the latter to be more professional in discharging his duties.

He said the police chief had erred in exonerating the protesters even before an investigation was launched. A valid point indeed.

Rewind.

Sirul Azhar Umar (left) claimed that he acted under orders and that those with a motive to murder Altantuya Shaariibuu - for which the former police commando was convicted and sentenced to death - are still walking free.

This sent shockwaves throughout the nation and there were widespread calls for an investigation.

However, Khalid dismissed the need for a new probe.

Then, Dr Mahathir Mohamad raised the issue as he dropped a bombshell on Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

He wanted Sirul's allegations probed and argued that it would be unjust to hang a police personnel for following orders.

Mahathir also disclosed that when Sirul was part of his security detail, the latter did not

commit any murder.

Though Mahathir clarified he was not accusing Najib of committing a crime, his comments however once again fueled the cauldron of speculation as to the latter's involvement.

Inconsistencies

Khalid then disclosed that the police met with Sirul in Australia - where he had fled prior to the Federal Court verdict - and found that there was nothing worth pursuing.

Sirul denied that police officers had interviewed him in Sydney but the police chief refused to budge.

He instead launched a tirade against Sirul, calling him a "desperate man" resorting to desperate measures to save his life.

"He is doing his best not to return to Malaysia where he will be facing the death penalty," he had thundered.

Fair enough. Anyone would be desperate in avoiding the noose being tightened around the neck, but the Malaysian government has yet to file an application for extradition, and this too has raised questions.

DAP veteran Lim Kit Siang demanded that Khalid reveal the names of the policemen who met Sirul, but this fell on deaf ears.

So, did the police chief once again close the chapter on a case of public interest even before an investigation was launched?

As far as the Altantuya murder is concerned, no stone is too small to be left unturned due to the high-profile nature of the case.

The man charged and discharged with abetting the murder is a close confidant of the prime minister and the policemen involved are from the elite unit, who are not deployed for disputes between lovers.

There is a slew of unanswered questions and the fact that the courts did not establish a motive for the murder have cast aspersions on both the police investigations and judiciary.

Khalid should solve this riddle instead of patrolling the virtual world for seditious tweets and Facebook postings. We need real world policing.