

DPM denies making 'small fry' remark
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Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin today denied news reports that he had dubbed the cabinet-established interfaith committee as "small fry".

Speaking to reporters in Perlis, Muhyiddin (right) said: "I did not mention those words. I have been in politics for a long time and know what the media need, and I brief them in detail, so that they can take down what I said."

He added the media must be more responsible and he would have to look at their reports, according to Bernama.

Yesterday, it was reported that Muhyiddin had referred to the newly established Committee on Promoting Inter-faith Understanding and Harmony "small fry" with no legal powers.

According to him, the committee does not have the power to decide on religious disputes.

"It is not a council or commission as proposed in the past... It's just a small committee."

It was apparently a move to cool simmering tensions among Muslim groups who expressed concerns that the committee would undermine Islam and the Rulers' Council.

Reports of Muhyiddin's remarks have prompted angry reactions from committee members, forcing the indefinite postponement of the committee's second meeting today.

Koh is disappointed

In a related development, Minister in the Prime Minister Department Koh Tsu Koon (right) expressed hope that the committee will continue the meeting once Muhyiddin clarifies the matter.

"I can understand why the religious leaders are upset and I am disappointed too," he said, at a function in Cheras, Kuala Lumpur today.

However, he said further clarification is needed on whether the deputy prime minister Muhyiddin Yassin made the statement or he was misquoted.

He also added that he is in favour of the interfaith committee saying that it is a good mechanism to promote dialogue to dispel any misconceptions.