

**Swift end needed to sermon issue**  
**Malaysiakini.com**  
**August 23, 2010**

COMMENT Can one be blamed if one feels nervous on hearing that Penang police have formed a special team to investigate the alleged substitution of Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng's name in place of the Yang Di Pertuan Agong's at Friday sermons at some mosques in Penang?

That and Prime Minister Najib Razak's interest in the matter being investigated until it yields a finding are to say the least inauspicious auguries.

We are familiar with similar expressions of intent to get to the bottom of puzzling incidents, the most recent being the mysterious death of Teoh Beng Hock (and that is already 13 months ago), and their outcomes.

NONE It's not just bureaucratic elephantiasis that's the problem; it's the inherent politics that delays or prevents puzzling incidents from being unraveled.

The matter of the name-substitution puzzle in Penang would seem remarkably easy to untangle.

Since nobody disputes that the sermons delivered two Fridays' ago were from a standard text, composed by the authorities in the state Islamic religious council, it would be easy enough to retrieve a copy and establish whether Lim's name had appeared where the Agong's ought to have been.

If not, then which sermon deliverer at which mosque did the deed of name-substitution occur? And under who's importuning?

The investigations cannot be more complicated than that unless, of course, somebody wants to keep the pot stewing?

Penang police have said they should be able to wrap up investigations soon. One would be surprised that inquiries this straightforward would take more than a few days.

It's already more than a week since Defence Minister and Umno chief for Penang, Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, first highlighted the matter.

Given the matter's inflammatory nature, the alleged incidents of name-substitution should have been investigated first before being aired in public.

But Islam has become a highly politicised issue and one cannot expect discretion to trump valour in a matter like this one.

Still, an investigation that is this uncomplicated should not take too long to issue in a finding.

Some Muslims uncomfortable

Meanwhile, it would help if CM Lim refrains from using the Islamic saying 'Amar ma'aruf nahi mungkar' (Forbid the bad and promote the good).

Authoritative opinion has held that there is nothing amiss if a non-Muslim invokes the saying. But some Muslims are uncomfortable when this invocation is enunciated by a non-Muslim.

Far be it one's intent to suggest that it's Lim's not infrequent use of this saying that has led to this diabolism where his name was substituted for the Agong's, that is, assuming that the standard text didn't in the first place sport his name instead of the Agong's.

But in matters of this kind, it is not just discretion, it's sublimely wise not to intone where even angels fear to whisper.

Suffice his government has doubled its annual allocation for matters Islamic, opened a surau in Komtar where for three decades there wasn't one, and has now allocated a hitherto unmatched Adilfitri bonus of RM400 for Penang's civil servants.

Apparently, in performing the good to Penang's denizens of the Islamic faith, Lim has to be content with actions speaking louder than words.

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