



**Zahrain's aide returns RM1,000 'haram' money**  
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Ismail Mohd Ali, the special assistant to Bayan Baru Independent MP Zahrain Mohd Hashim who quit PKR in February, has today returned the RM1,000 cash awarded to him by the Penang government upon his mother's death.

Ismail (*right*), who was PKR Bayan Baru permanent chairperson, said he had decided to return the money after discussions with family members following reports that the money had allegedly come from the state's gambling sources.

Ismail collected the grant as part of the state government's senior citizens beneficiary programme in August when his 82-year-old mother Maria passed away in July.

"I do not want or need this money. Let it be used for the poor," he told reporters at a press conference held in Bayan Baru by the Umno division for about 50 Muslim senior citizens who wanted their money returned to the state government.

Ismail, who claimed that he was not an Umno member, and that he was at the event on a personal capacity, urged Penang exco for religious affairs Abdul Malik Abdul Kassim to refrain from "playing politics" with the issue.

"*Haram is haram*. Abdul Malik is not qualified to be a state exco for religious affairs!" Ismail said, holding up his birth certificate as proof that he was indeed Maria's son.

This is the second event organised to have senior citizens gather to return their state awards.

State opposition leader Azhar Ibrahim organised the first in Penaga on Tuesday.

Azhar, who is Penaga assemblyperson, was present at the press conference with Umno Penang information chief Musa Sheikh Fadzir, who is also a senator.

The controversy shook the Penang Muslim community when Umno information youth chief Reezal Merican alleged in Kepala Batas that state money used for the senior citizens' programme came from haram money derived from a RM500,000 contribution that the state had asked of the Penang Turf Club.

Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng had denied the amount was used for the Muslim community, while state exco for religious affairs Abdul Malik Abdul Kassim had challenged the Umno-led federal government to rid gambling dens in the county first before criticising income derived from it.

Since the launch of the programme this year, a total of 110,000 senior citizens have registered for the award while their kin will also receive a RM1,000 one-off payment for deceased parents.

'No incident under BN'

At the event, senior citizen Hapsah Saad (*in white headscarf*) who had been an Umno member for 53





years tearfully said she felt very disappointed that the money awarded to her by the state came from gambling sources.

"Thank God, I have finally found out the truth, that is why I am here to return the money," said the 82-year-old, while digging her purse for cash notes to hand it over to Umno Bayan Baru chief Abdul Rahim Saibu (*below, in white shirt*).

Later, Abdul Rahim said he had refrained from commenting on the matter until he had verified that the money had indeed been derived from gambling sources.

He added that all religions prohibit gambling and discourage its believers from receiving money from such sources.

He added that such incidents had never occurred during the BN's rule, claiming that the federal government usually allocated about RM35 million to fund programmes for the elderly and poor using money from *halal* sources.

"I am really sorry for the senior citizens, their lives are hard, and to suddenly find out about the source of this RM100, how do you think they feel as Muslims?" he queried.

"The poor senior citizens have suffered all their lives, even though they may not be very comfortable, they have enough to go by. But no matter how difficult, as a Muslim, they would never receive *haram* money," he added.

'Not Umno's money'

Abdul Rahim denied that Umno used the party's money to help the senior citizens repay the cash, although he conceded that many had spent the money and felt rather awkward to be present at today's event.

When asked what he thought of the federal government approving gambling licenses across the country, Abdul Rahim said he was not questioning the licensing but wanted Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng to clarify the matter again to all Penangites.

He said after the monies are collected, he would have to contact the party's liaison committee to decide what to do with the money.

Meanwhile, Umno Bayan Baru religious affairs bureau Hamid Araby Md Salih urged Abdul Malik (*left*), who is Batu Maung assemblyperson, to quit his state exco post immediately as he had "not only lied to the people, he had lied to Allah, too".

Hamid said if the Muslim community knew where the money came from they would have rejected it from the onset.

He urged the Muslims in Pakatan Rakyat to rethink their 'dignity and position' in their respective parties and questioned how they would deal with their Islamic responsibilities.

"Please think again about your role as a Muslim; I want to ask what kind of skull cap are



you using?" he queried.

"I feel this is all very strange and bizarre because such incidents never happened before during BN's time; I am sorry but we are not '*anak haram*' (illegitimate children)" he said.

"And we cannot become *anak haram* merely with payment of RM100 or RM1,000!" he added, while the participants applauded his comment.

Demo against CM Guan Eng

Meanwhile, *Bernama* reported that about 100 youths staged a protest against Lim shortly after his arrival from Australia at the Penang International Airport tonight.

Calling themselves 'Pemuda Pulau Pinang', they gathered outside the airport at 8.35pm carrying placards condemning him for the state government's action of giving compassionate financial aid to Muslim senior citizens from money they alleged was earned from gambling sources, which is not permitted by Islam.

Lim, who had made a working visit to Adelaide, was seen walking to his car without acknowledging the protestors.

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