

Sermon reader defends prayer that caused a stir
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GEORGE TOWN - The khatib or sermon reader who caused a stir by reciting the prayer for Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng instead of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong during Friday sermons recently, defended his action Tuesday, saying it was not wrong in Islam.

Zakaria Ahmad, however, acknowledged that his approach and the occasion and place where he recited the "doa" (prayer) for Lim were seen as wrong.

"God willing, after this, I will say such a 'doa' at other occasions and places which are more suitable," he told reporters after giving his explanation to the Penang Islamic Religious Council (MAIPP), here, following the controversy.

Zakaria said the issue had been blown up by some politicians and he thanked MAIPP for giving him guidance.

MAIPP president Elias Zakaria said the committee was satisfied with Zakaria's explanation, and the outcome of the deliberation would be tabled at a MAIPP meeting for further action.

He said as for now, no action would be taken against Zakaria as he agreed not to repeat his action.

"We informed Zakaria on the uneasiness felt and the implications of his action. He admitted committing it, promised not to do it again and would even publicly explain the matter for the good of all quarters," added Elias.

Meanwhile, Penang police chief Ayub Yaakob, when contacted, said police had taken a statement from Zakaria.

Penang Umno liaison chief Ahmad Zahid Hamidi recently revealed that during the recital of the "doa' during Friday sermons at some mosques in the state, the King's name had been replaced with Lim's name, incurring the ire of many Muslims.

Police reports were lodged against Zakaria over the controversy.

Zakaria then reportedly admitted having omitted the name of the King, reasoning that he was praying for the well-being of all the country's leaders including the King. — Bernama

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