

Zam: Paint right picture of Islam

SUNGAI PETANI: Information Minister Datuk Zainuddin Maidin has called on Muslims to portray a positive picture of Islam to the other communities.

He said there were Muslims who gave a negative picture of Islam and its followers through their own action, Bernama reported.

Referring to the internal e-mail sent by an officer of an insurance company to the staff, telling them not to extend Deepavali greetings to Hindus, Zainuddin said such an act did not portray the spirit of brotherhood adopted by Muslims.

"The act by the Takaful company executive gave the wrong message about Muslims to the followers of other faiths," he told reporters after presenting

Aidilfitri assistance to 45 poor people in Tanjung Dawai, near here, yesterday.

According to press reports, Takaful Malaysia's Syariah Department head Fauzi Mustaffar had sent the e-mail to his staff earlier this month prohibiting them from extending greetings in conjunction with festivals such as Deepavali, Durga Pooja and Lakshmi Pooja.

After being criticised, Fauzi later apologised for sending the e-mail and explained that it was meant only for internal circulation.

Zainuddin said although the officer concerned had apologised, his action had tarnished the image of Islam.

"To me, he is not a good leader because he had used his position in an Islamic institution to convey an inaccurate

message on Islam," he said.

When contacted later, Zainuddin said although the directive was only given to their staff, it cannot be justified as it went against government policy.

"Even Pak Lah (Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi) and other ministers convey festive greetings including Deepavali, Chinese New Year and Christmas, and national open houses are conducted.

"Government institutions should promote government philosophy which upholds *muhibbah* and the multi-racial spirit.

"A narrow understanding of Islam does not encourage or contribute to a good multi-racial spirit. This kind of officer should not be in a government institution," he added.