

# Be more sensitive to religious issues, leaders told

■ **By Hamidah Atan**  
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**PUTRAJAYA:** Political leaders, regardless of the parties they represent, must remain sensitive to religious issues, no matter how trivial.

Tan Sri Abdul Hamid Othman, religious adviser to the prime minister, said such issues must never be politicised as this could disrupt peace and stability.

"There must be alternatives and solutions to every problem.

"As political party leaders, they must refrain from mak-

ing statements that can lead to provocation or anger.

"They must be tolerant of each other and seek solutions that will ensure the continued religious and ethnic coexistence among all the races," he added.

Hamid was referring to the controversy over the Ma Tzu Goddess of the Sea statue in Kudat, which had resulted in the resignation of Tan Sri Chong Kah Kiat as the Sabah deputy chief minister.

Chong wanted the 27-metre statue to be built, but Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman had ordered the work to

be stopped.

Musa said the decision to stop the construction followed objections from other quarters.

During a meeting with 50 Christian, Buddhist and Taoist leaders, Musa said the United Sabah Islamic Association, Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia, Persatuan Belia Intelek Kudat, Kudat As-Syakirin mosque committee and Umno Kudat were unhappy with the site for the statue.

They objected because the statue was being built too close to the district mosque.

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*Tan Sri Abdul Hamid Othman*



Musa said the state government had offered an alternative site for the statue and agreed to pay compensation for the cost incurred.

He accused Chong of trying to politicise the issue, adding that the original site of the statue had been given to a shipping company to put up a building.

Hamid said constructing

places of worship for all races had never been a problem.

"It is not an issue at all, but the location matters.

"So, it becomes the responsibility of all quarters and the leaders to find a suitable site that will not create problems for someone else."

"Sensitivity of the location must never be overlooked," he said.

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