

# 'Muslims know what to do'

## No need to dictate participation in non-Muslim events, says PM

**GOMBAK:** There is no need for guidelines for Muslims visiting non-Muslim houses of worship or events, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He stated that Muslims are already aware of religious guidelines for visiting these sites, particularly not participating in non-Muslim prayers.

"I think there is no need (for the guidelines) because as Muslims they should know (the dos and don'ts).

"(Just) like I am right now; I'm here (at Batu Caves) not to participate in any (Hindu) prayers," he told reporters yesterday when visiting the temple at Batu Caves here ahead of the Thaipusam celebration.

Anwar also said that the Cabinet has made its decision on the matter, and he will be presenting it to Sultan Nazrin Shah, who is the National Council of Islamic Religious Affairs chairman.

"While it is true that Islam is the official religion of Malaysia, there are also many races and religions that we need to take care of if we want to maintain peace.

"Therefore, I feel there's no need to give any further explanation on the guidelines.

"The Muslims know the rules in accordance with their akidah (faith)," he said.

Also present during the visit were Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari, Digital Minister Gobind Singh Deo, Deputy Entrepreneur and Cooperatives Development Minister Datuk R. Ramanan and



**Staying inclusive:** All policies must get the nod from the Cabinet and consider national unity, according to Aaron (left) and Mohd Na'im.

MIC president Tan Sri S. Vigneswaran.

In a written Dewan Rakyat reply on Wednesday, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Religious Affairs) Datuk Dr Mohd Na'im Mokhtar had said that the guidelines would also cover the involvement of Muslims in events held at non-Muslim places of worship.

Under the proposed rules, there can be no speeches or songs with religious "propaganda" or performances that would insult Muslims, while the premises cannot display religious symbols of faiths other than Islam.

The proposal subsequently received public backlash.

Earlier yesterday, the Cabinet agreed that the Malaysian Islamic Development Department (Jakim) could offer advice to Muslims on safeguarding their faith concerning participation in non-Muslim



celebrations and events.

Meanwhile, in a joint statement issued following yesterday's Cabinet meeting, Mohd Na'im and National Unity Minister Datuk Aaron Ago Dagang stated that Jakim can only advise Muslims on how to protect their faith, but this is not policy.

The ministers said that this was decided by the Cabinet.

"The Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister, discussed the proposal regarding the implementation of guidelines for events involving Muslims in non-Islamic places of worship, presented by the Religious Affairs Minister.

"The meeting considered the confusion surrounding the proposal, as this issue arose following several enquiries from Muslims regarding invitations to events organised by non-Muslim communities, which may involve religious elements.

"To provide guidance to Muslims, Jakim has taken the initiative to develop these guidelines.

"Considering that this matter has created confusion among Malaysia's diverse population, the Cabinet agreed that Jakim can offer advice to Muslims on the importance of safeguarding their faith in relation to this issue, but this advice is not considered a policy.

"The Cabinet also stated that any policy should take national unity into account and must first obtain Cabinet approval," according to the statement.

The joint statement further said that inclusive discussions - involving Malaysians of all religions and races - must consider all parties' sensitivities because they are critical to building national cohesion.

"Therefore, matters related to religious harmony will be further discussed in the Harmony Among Religious Believers Committee, which is co-chaired by Aaron and Mohd Na'im.

"The first meeting of the committee is scheduled for this month and will hear the views of members, including 24 representatives from different faiths (Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Sikhism, Taoism and Baha'i)," read the joint statement.