

# PM: No plan to split religious affairs duties

## 'It was just one MP's personal view on portfolio'

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**PUCHONG:** The suggestion to split the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Religious Affairs) portfolio was only a personal statement by the Raub MP, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Prime Minister said parties in the unity government do not agree with the proposal by DAP lawmaker Chow Yu Hui.

"It is not agreed on by any quarters in the government or the Cabinet," he said when met by reporters after performing Friday prayers here yesterday.

Anwar said any appointments are also at the discretion of the

Prime Minister.

"We have a Religious Affairs minister and a National Unity minister. There is also a harmony committee which represents all races and religions. This avenue is sufficient," he said.

The Interfaith Harmony Committee (Harmoni) is co-chaired by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Religious Affairs) Datuk Dr Mohd Na'im Mokhtar and National Unity Minister Datuk Aaron Ago Dagang.

On Wednesday, Chow proposed splitting the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Religious Affairs) portfolio into separate entities, of which one would be in charge of Islamic affairs and the other dealing with other faiths.



**Afternoon meal:** Anwar greeting people during lunch at a restaurant in Puchong. - Bernama

The MP said this when debating the motion of thanks on the royal address in the Dewan Rakyat.

A similar arrangement, he added, existed in some state government administrations, where elected representatives manage non-Islamic religious affairs.

At another press conference, Communications Minister Fahmi Fadzil reiterated that it was the personal view of Chow.

"On the issue of the religious affairs minister's portfolio being halved to allow for a non-Muslim affairs' division, it has never been discussed by DAP or the Cabinet. This is the Raub MP's personal view," he said.

"There is already a mechanism in the Harmony Committee under the National Unity Ministry which discusses issues on non-Muslim affairs and national unity. Chow's view has no necessity."

Chow's proposal, however, drew criticism from unity government allies, with Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Wan Rosdy Wan Ismail saying the party does not see a need to create a ministerial position specifically for the non-Muslim community.

He said the Cabinet, which comprises members from various ethnic backgrounds, ensures that the people's concerns are heard via their elected representatives.

He said such a position, as suggested by Chow, should not be considered as it would only give rise to polemics that would anger the Malay-Muslim community towards the government.

Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainudin also questioned the proposal, saying that to protect harmony, the National Unity Ministry was established so that matters involving other faiths could be discussed.