

Khalid Samad stands by conspiracy claims
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By Clara Chooi

SHAH ALAM, Sept 8 — Despite yesterday's denial by the Selangor Islamic Religious Council (Mais), Shah Alam MP Khalid Samad insisted today that the authority's meeting last month with Islamic NGOs was part of a conspiracy to unseat Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim.

The outspoken PAS leader said the state's religious authorities had deliberately undermined Khalid Ibrahim when they decided to hold the meeting in secret without his knowledge.

While acknowledging that the council comes under the direct purview of the Sultan and not the state government, Khalid Samad (picture) said the authority should have shown respect to Khalid Ibrahim as the state's menteri besar by extending an invitation.

"If they had good intentions towards the MB then why hold the meeting because in the first place, the MB had already requested for Jais's (Selangor Islamic Religious Department) report on the recent church raid.

"The report has not yet been submitted but yet they are taking their own initiative to have a meeting to brief all the Muslim NGOs on the issue... why do something to the contrary of what the MB requested? It is very suspicious," he told reporters when met on the sidelines of the state government's Hari Raya open house here.

Khalid Samad had yesterday alleged that a meeting between Mais, Jais, several Islamic NGOs and representatives from the Attorney-General's Chambers last month was part of a conspiracy to topple Khalid Ibrahim.

His statement, carried on his blog, was front-paged in Umno-owned daily Utusan Malaysia today.

Mais chairman Datuk Setia Mohamad Adzib Mohd Isa confirmed such a meeting was held but denied it was political in nature, claiming it was summoned to explain to the Muslim groups the controversial raid by Jais on the Damansara Utama Methodist Church (DUMC) on August 3.

The contentious raid has escalated religious conflict between Muslims and Christians in the country, with Malay newspapers highlighting allegations of Christians trying to convert Muslims through welfare work.

Khalid Samad scoffed at Adzib's explanation, reiterating that the menteri besar should have been informed of the meeting.

"It is like we are having two state governments... One is doing one thing, the other is doing something else. This is in contrary to what the state government is trying to achieve, which is to appease all parties with the facts but they are acting on one report from one party and inciting the NGOs with this," he said.

Khalid Samad pointed out that Adzib had also admitted to the existence of a memorandum

to the Sultan which was prepared following the meeting.

"He says it was done by the NGOs but it was as a result of their briefing and the way they clarified the church raid issue so I think it was definitely aimed at the menteri besar. If not, please show us the memorandum... We want to know what it is," he said.

Khalid Samad also concurred with a statement by influential Muslim scholar Dr Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin yesterday when the latter accused the religious authorities of using a colonial system to restrict Islam, saying this could further provoke apostasy.

"Yes, you want people to become ignorant of Islam, you don't want them to speak about it except those given a licence to do so. This is sounding very colonial. We talk about celebrating Merdeka but at the same time we are being restricted and tied down by a system that was probably initiated by the British," he said.

Asri, the former Perlis mufti, made his statement in response to Jais's decision to charge Khalid Samad for delivering an unauthorised sermon and for revoking Selangor PAS chief Dr Rani Osman's religious credentials.

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