

Tsu Koon backs Himpun's right to rally
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 19 — Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon today defended this weekend's mass rally to protest alleged Christian efforts to convert Muslims, saying Muslims too had the right to express their views.

Koh (picture), whose Cabinet portfolio includes national unity, said Himpunan Sejuta Umat was acceptable as long as organisers and participants aired their grouses peacefully and kept to the principles of Rukun Negara and the 1 Malaysia concept.

"In a multi-ethnic society, multi-religious society, different groups have different concerns," he told reporters after attending the National Patriotic Songs Choir Competition here.

"But as long as they voice it in a positive and moderate manner, then it is part of the right of expression."

But he stressed that any group wanting to voice its opinions must consider the multiracial reality of Malaysian society and hoped that the rally will not further stoke racial tension but increase mutual understanding instead.

Himpunan Sejuta Umat (Himpun) was organised by various right-wing religious groups calling for Muslims to rise up and fight the "challenge of Christianisation".

The mass rally was mooted following the controversial August 3 raid by Selangor Islamic authorities on Damansara Utama Methodist Church (DUMC), where it was alleged that Christians were converting Muslims.

It is illegal to proselytise to Muslims in Malaysia.

Some 1,000 Facebook users so far have promised to show up but Himpun could push Umno and PAS to seek relevance among more religious Malays if the rally at Shah Alam Stadium this weekend pulls a larger than expected crowd.

With racial tension stoked in recent years by church firebombings and the cow head protest, Saturday's rally could resurrect fears of growing Islamisation among non-Muslims and more liberal Malays.

Christian leaders have denied claims that Christians were attempting to convert Muslims and have called Himpun's fight "irrelevant".

Similarly, Pakatan Rakyat (PR) has said it will not support the rally as Islam was not at risk from Christianisation.

Source:

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