

Clerics want guidelines for interaction between Muslims, non-Muslims
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By Shazwan Mustafa Kamal

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 16 — The government should draw up a guideline regulating interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims, the Ulama Association of Malaysia (PUM) said today.

"This is important and has to be done immediately as a solution to religious issues concerning a multi-racial society in Malaysia. Recurring issues are not just about religious celebrations of different races but other aspects of law, administration and economy," said PUM secretary-general Dr Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor in a statement.

He said the proposed guideline, called the "guideline on the code of conduct between Muslims and non-Muslims in Malaysia" (Garis Panduan Fiqh Interaksi Orang Islam dan Bukan Islam di Malaysia) would help avoid confusion between the two groups and make people better understand Islam.

Mohd Roslan said the National Fatwa Council should be given the task of drawing up the relevant guidelines, and that it should be made the official reference material for everyone in any issues concerning "religion and racial interaction".

The cleric said that the guideline would ensure there would be no more views and opinions from those who did not have an "authority" in Islam.

"The views expressed by the National Fatwa Council in the guideline will be the official position of the country.

"The guideline will present Islam as (a religion) with teachings that promote justice, peace, harmony and unity," said Mohd Roslan.

PUM has previously urged Muslims to stay away from non-Muslims religious festivals following the prime minister's visit to Thaipusam celebrations last week.

Perak Mufti Tan Sri Harussani Zakaria had criticised Datuk Seri Najib Razak for "sacrificing his faith" by attending the Hindu festival at Batu Caves last Tuesday, the prime minister's third visit in as many years.

PUM noted that guidelines set out by the National Fatwa Council on April 12, 2005 stated that Muslims cannot attend events which incorporate ceremonies that go against the teachings of Islam.

But the Perak mufti has since then said Najib's attendance of Thaipusam celebrations at Batu Caves recently was not against Islamic doctrine.

His comments come after Najib personally spoke to him about his role on the day.

Harussani said this involved a speech by the prime minister and at no time was the latter involved in a religious procession nor did he enter the cave temple.

The Perak mufti went on to say that as a national leader, it is not wrong for Najib to join other races for festive celebrations so long as he does not endorse or participate in the rites of other religions.

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