

Muhyiddin: Zakat meant to aid poor, not for keeping
The Malaysian Insider
August 17, 2011
By Debra Chong

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 17 — Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin urged today a review of how zakat money was being distributed, saying the current distribution method had cast a shadow on how Muslim-majority Malaysia was treating its Muslim poor. The deputy prime minister acknowledged that impoverished Muslims, especially those living in urban areas, had been marginalised due to poor distribution of alms collected through a compulsory Islamic tax.

“Zakat is meant to be given out to help the poor, and is not for keeping,” Muhyiddin said in his speech at the Masjid Muadz Bin Jabal here this evening after handing out donations to orphans, single mothers, the disabled, the elderly and others considered destitute.

“Zakat management, especially by Islamic companies and institutions that collect as much as RM235 million a year, could be better ... [the current practice] gives the impression they [the poor] are marginalised,” he explained to reporters later.

Muhyiddin who is also the Federal Territory Umno chief said those in charge should not make it harder for Muslims already down on their luck to apply for aid.

He suggested that monetary aid could also include helping Muslims set up businesses as those earning a monthly income of RM1,200 would still find it hard to survive in the city on such limited funds, more so if they have large families.

He stressed that the Islamic tax money was meant to be given out to benefit poor Muslims, and appeared regretful that they had been forced to turn to those from other religions for aid.

“It’s shameful for us to be called a model Islamic nation ... Muslims in our country must be more committed,” he added.

Muhyiddin did not single out any one particular religion but his remarks come on the back of allegations raised earlier this month that churches were enticing Malay Muslims to convert to Christianity through charity.

Pro-Umno newspapers Berita Harian and Harian Metro had reported cases where Muslims claimed they were forced to accept cash and free food from a Petaling Jaya church, after failing to get aid from Baitulmal or the state fund for the poor, which is generated from tithes collected from mosques.

The DPM’s remarks appear to echo former Perlis mufti Dr Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin who had questioned if red tape had forced impoverished Muslims to seek help from churches.

The influential cleric had highlighted that it was not a sin for poor Muslims to receive aid from non-Muslims, pointing out that the blame lay with practitioners of Islam who were supposed to help their fellow believers.

The Malaysian Insider
Copyright © 2011 The Malaysian Insider
Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/muhyiddin-zakat-meant-to-aid-poor->

not-for-keeping/