

**Tsu Koon says 'Christian threat' seminar is state government's prerogative**  
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**By Shannon Teoh**

KUALA LUMPUR, April 5 — Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon has said the Cabinet will discuss last weekend's "Christian threat" seminar in Johor but admitted the state government had the authority to organise the event that required the attendance of over 300 religious school teachers.

The minister in the Prime Minister's Department told The Malaysian Insider what was important was that the Cabinet's Special Committee to Promote Inter-Religious Understanding and Harmony had engaged the organisers.

"In a way, it has been resolved, the title has been changed," the minister in charge of unity and performance management said, referring to the move by the Johor Education and Mufti departments to drop the reference to a "Christian threat" in the seminar's theme.

But when quizzed over the fact that the Mufti Department refused to change the content of the seminar, Koh (picture), who is also Gerakan president, said "that is their prerogative."

"The interfaith committee chairman has tried to sort out the matter. We will discuss it in Cabinet and see what can be done," the senator said when told that a Christian minister would ask Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin for an explanation.

Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Seri Maximus Ongkili told The Malaysian Insider on Tuesday he would raise the matter at tomorrow's Cabinet meeting to Muhyiddin, who is also education minister, as "the threat is only an allegation."

The government's interfaith panel chairman, Datuk Azman Amin Hassan, had said the matter has been resolved after the Johor Education Department agreed to drop the reference to a "Christian threat" from the seminar's title.

But the Council of Churches Malaysia (CCM) said Christian ministers should use their office to ensure the Cabinet takes a stand on last Saturday's seminar after Datuk Seri Najib Razak failed to censure the seminar despite calls from non-Muslim groups for him to "walk your talk" of unity and moderation.

Some 300 religious teachers from Johor national schools attended the seminar entitled "Strengthening the Faith: What is the Role of Teachers?", which was held in the state capital Johor Baru.

The seminar had attracted controversy among non-Muslims for focusing on the alleged threat of Christianisation to Islam.

But Muslim NGOs insisted that the government was duty-bound to address the "threat of Christianisation," which they repeatedly profess to be real despite the absence of firm evidence.

In response, Johor dropped specific mention of the "Christian threat" from the seminar originally themed "Pemantapan Aqidah, Bahaya Liberalisme dan Pluralism Serta Ancaman Kristianisasi Terhadap Umat Islam. Apa Peranan Guru?" (Strengthening the Faith, the Dangers of Liberalism and Pluralism and the Threat of Christianity towards Muslims. What is the Role of Teachers?).

But Johor Mufti Department officials said that while the title of the seminar will be changed, the contents and structure will remain unaltered.

The Mufti, Datuk M. Tahrir Kiai Samsudin, also insisted the seminar was for the good of teaching Islam.

Christians form 9.2 per cent of Malaysia's 28.3 million-strong population.

In recent years, the Christian and Muslim religious communities have been engaged in a tug-of-war over the word "Allah", with the latter group arguing that its use should be exclusive to them on the grounds that Islam is monotheistic and the word "Allah" denotes the Muslim god.

Christians, however, have argued that "Allah" is an Arabic word that has been used by those of other religious beliefs, including the Jews, in reference to God in many other parts of the world, notably in Arab nations and Indonesia.

Conservative Muslim groups have also accused Christians of attempting to convert Malays, resulting in heightened tension between followers of the two religions.

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