

**Putrajaya has revoked PR status of Johor resort operator in surau backlash**  
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**BY V ANBALAGAN**

Putrajaya has revoked the permanent resident (PR) status of a resort operator in Johor who had allowed a group of Buddhist to meditate in the resort's surau, saying he was being "insensitive to Muslims and Islam".

Home Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi (pic) said today the revocation was done in accordance with provisions in the Federal Constitution, adding the resort operator was told this while under detention.

"He is a Singaporean and the PR status is a privilege given to him and the government can withdraw it. He can still come and go into the country but he is now subjected to the requirements under the Immigration Act for expatriate workers in the country," Zahid told reporters in Putrajaya today.

The resort owner was arrested last week after a 63-second video - "Chinese Buddhists pray in surau: surau becomes temple" - depicting a Buddhist group using the surau at the resort for meditation was uploaded on YouTube on August 10.

The owner had earlier defended his action, saying that he did not think allowing believers of other religions to use the surau was wrong.

Ahmad Zahid hoped the episode would serve as a lesson to others not to treat lightly issues of religious sensitivities.

"No one one should take our hospitality for granted. It is not a light matter especially when his action has belittled Islam the official religion of the Federation," he told reporters after attending a Hari Raya open house organised by Pengasih, a non-governmental organisation set up to assist drug dependents.

He said his ministry had no powers over Islamic religious matters as that came under the jurisdiction of rulers of the states.

"We are more concerned about safety and public order," he said, adding his ministry would work together with agencies including Jakim to curb posting of sensitive videos in the social media.

Ahmad Zahid also assured the ministry would have reacted in the same manner if the sanctity of other religions were not respected.

The resort owner's decision to allow the Buddhist to use the surau had reportedly caused a furore among the fishing community in Sedili Besar, Kota Tinggi, after it was discovered by a resort visitor who wanted to perform his Asar prayers at the surau last Saturday.

Following the incident, the 45-year-old resort owner was arrested for four days to assist in the investigation.

He was released on police bail yesterday.

The police said the investigation papers of the case was being finalised before submitting it to the public prosecutor for action.

"We are also waiting for further directive from the public prosecutor while at the same time, monitoring all activities and public reaction pertaining to the case," said Johor deputy police chief Datuk Ismail Yatim yesterday.

The Sultan of Johor, Sultan Ibrahim, has ordered the surau demolished once investigations were completed.

Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin yesterday urged all parties to stop the polemics over the issue of demolishing a resort's surau.

He said there was no need to argue over the issue anymore as the state government would abide by the Sultan's order.

"The decision has been made. It is the order made by Sultan Ibrahim, as the head of the Islamic religion in the state. In making the decision, the Sultan had sought the views and advice of various parties," he said today. - August 17, 2013.

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