

Tengku Adnan draws fire from Hindus for suggesting only their temples cause problems

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Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor stepped into a minefield when he "downgraded" a century-old Hindu temple into a shrine and then pointedly asked why the authorities "always had problems with temples and not churches, mosques or Chinese temples".

The attitude of the Federal Territories minister to a sacred Hindu spot hit a raw nerve among other politicians and the head of the Malaysia Hindu Sangam, who responded strongly today.

They questioned if Tengku Adnan knew enough about Hinduism to make comments on what is a shrine or a temple and on the Sri Muneswarar Kaliyaman Temple, in particular.

The Malaysia Hindu Sangam, the MIC youth chief, an Indian opposition politician and a lawyer took the minister to task.

On Tengku Adnan's suggestion that only Hindu temples were problematic, Malaysia Hindu Sangam president Datuk R.S. Mohan Shan shot back that it was because the government did not provide Hindus a proper site to build their temples.

"This is a ridiculous statement by the minister. We are the victims here. We are not the trouble-causers," Mohan responded.

"I have written a letter to Tengku Adnan on this matter and I am hoping for a speedy response," he revealed to The Malaysian Insider today.

MIC Youth chief T. Mohan, who was arrested when he tried to stop City Hall officers from demolishing part of the temple last week, was also upset by the remark that only Hindu temples caused problems.

He said, "If Hindus were given the proper avenue to fulfill their spiritual obligations in peace, issues such as this would have never occurred."

Parti Keadilan Rakyat vice-president N. Surendran said Tengku Adnan has failed to realise that a shrine is the sacred spot of any Hindu temple.

"Tengku Adnan is simply mocking Hindus," he said.

Former Teluk Intan parliamentarian M. Manogaran said, "We have been sidelined and marginalised and this is why we remain a 'problem' according to Tengku Adnan.

"It is such a shame that Indians who are in the country's mainstream politics and economy get bullied this way."

Manogaran said this is the main reason that Indian leaders from the opposition pact had called for an "Indian Affairs Department" or a "Minority Affairs Ministry" under Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's purview.

MIC's Mohan also was disappointed with Tengku Adnan for claiming that political parties were exploiting this issue for mileage.

Mohan said, "When the Pakatan Rakyat state government in Selangor had demolished a shrine inside a home in Sepang, MIC Youth had intervened to condemn the act. We were then hailed as heroes. Now we are being accused of playing politics."

Tengku Adnan told reporters today that the Hindu temple in Kuala Lumpur's Golden Triangle in Jalan P. Ramlee has always been a shrine and not a temple.

"I know what a temple and shrine is all about. I am also a pious man. I pray. I would not want to break something which people pray to," he had said.

The temple sits on reserve land meant for roads or walkways and the Kuala Lumpur City Hall had wanted to claim back some eight feet of land.

This was resisted by scores of worshippers who rushed to protect the temple, raising the temperature in Malaysia's religious landscape and pitting the ruling Barisan Nasional government against politicians from its own coalition.

Tengku Adnan said the ministry will be upgrading the temple into a tourist attraction and look into gazetting the land where the "shrine" sits.

He had also said the temple, which he insisted be called a "shrine" from now on, will not be given the entire land on which it is currently situated.

"The allocation will be only for the size of a shrine as we would need the rest of the space... the whole land belongs to us and we need to build a drainage system and carry out other necessary construction work." – September 9, 2013.

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