

College denies knowing tudung-clad woman in Penang dog adoption event

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By Looi Sue Chern

A private college in Penang, whose students organised a dog adoption programme last week, has denied that the event involved Muslims.

Han Chiang College chief executive Dr Chow Yong Neng said today the event organised as a co-curriculum activity by its event management students involved only non-Muslim students.

"We can confirm that we do not know the woman in the picture and that she is not one of our students.

"The objective of the event was to get non-Muslims to adopt strays and to reduce the number of strays. The event saw 10 dogs finding loving homes," Chow said, adding that the event was held in a public area at Penang Times Square.

The event, 'I Opt to Adopt', was held from March 4 until 8 and organised with non-governmental organisation, Save Our Strays (SOS) Penang.

The event became an issue yesterday after a picture showing a woman wearing a white headscarf posing for photos while carrying a dog at the event surfaced on Facebook. This has since caused an uproar on Facebook, namely among Muslims.

Earlier today, Bernama reported that the Penang Islamic Department (JAINPP) has been urged to investigate the programme.

The national news agency quoted Penang Umno Youth chief Rafizal Abdul Rahim as saying that JAINPP should take stern action so such incidents would not happen again in the state.

"We regret, and are disappointed and angry, and condemn the programme because we feel there is a hidden agenda by certain parties after the 'I want touch a dog' programme last year," he reportedly said.

The 'I Opt to Adopt' event became a hot issue after the picture of the tudung-clad woman was posted on a Facebook page called 'Penang Kini' yesterday with a message that read: "Panas!!! Program orang Islam peluk anjing dah menular ke Penang. Mana Malik Kassim?" (Hot!!! Muslim dog hugging programme has spread to Penang. Where is Malik Kassim?)

Malik Kassim refers to Penang religious exco Datuk Abdul Malik Abul Kassim of PKR.

In an immediate reaction yesterday, a SOS Penang spokesperson questioned the

Facebook page's administrator for calling it a programme for Muslims to touch dogs when it was not.

"It was clearly not an event for Muslims. Why did Penang Kini say it was? Why is Penang Kini stirring it up into something racial and political?

"What is the agenda of the page's administrator? What do they stand to gain from this? We demand they publicly apologise to the students who were trying to do something good," she said yesterday.

Last year, when activist Syed Azmi Alhabshi held the controversial "I want to touch a dog" event in Kuala Lumpur, which was open to everyone including Muslims, it outraged many Malays, who felt it was an insult to Islam.

He was heavily criticised despite his good intention to educate and help people overcome their fear of dogs and learn compassion for all animals, which Islam teaches. – March 10, 2015.

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