

Ex-chief secretary clears the air on his MP comment

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PUTRAJAYA: Tan Sri Samsudin Osman had only a few more days in office last week when he was bombarded with criticisms by several MPs over a statement he had made.

And yesterday, the ever tactful former Chief Secretary to the Government cleared the air over what he described as a "misconstrued intention" that left him with a bitter taste in the mouth.

Samsudin who ended his service on Saturday, said he was asked by reporters on the issue of "Customs-bashing", which some parties viewed as unfair, due to immunity enjoyed by MPs in Parliament.

He was reported as saying he would meet the Attorney-General to discuss the immunity enjoyed by MPs, especially in attacking government departments in Parliament without proof.

"I must say towards the end of my service, I was left disappointed, but I can understand why they were so upset with me.

"In the papers, it appeared as if I was the one pushing to make changes on a Constitutional matter... that is not the case at all. I know it's not my place (to do that).

"To one question asked relating to the issue (Customs and MPs) during that Press conference, I could not give



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them a sure answer.

"So, I said I would refer the matter to the Attorney-General, that's all," said Samsudin.

Asked why he took so long to explain himself, Samsudin said he was busy tying up loose ends before leaving office, but had conveyed his explanation to some MPs through friends.

"I have always tried to be proper. I did explain... other than that I just suffered in silence," he said, before asking that he be spared such a hard time, as he had never asked much from the Press before.

Following reports on his comments, several MPs spared no time in lashing at him the next day, for entertaining thoughts on curbing

their immunity.

Even his successor Tan Sri Mohd Sidek Hassan, the former International Trade and Industries Ministry secretary-general, was issued a warning against repeating Samsudin's "doing".

Asked if he had indeed met the Attorney-General about MPs' immunity, Samsudin said it would be his secret.

Speaking to reporters after releasing fish into the Putrajaya Lake before the 2006 Putrajaya Fishing Competition next Saturday, Samsudin, spoke highly of Mohd Sidek, saying that Mohd Sidek's vast experience, especially in dealing with the private sector, would be beneficial to the civil service.