

## No, Tuanku, you are wrong

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NO HOLDS BARRED

Raja Petra Kamarudin

Sultan: Mosques not for politics

SHAH ALAM: Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah of Selangor has reminded mosque officials not to allow the use of the houses of worship for politics.

He said in discharging their duties, mosque officials should comply with directives issued by the Selangor Islamic Religious Council (Mais), which is the trustee of all mosques in the state.

"Mosques cannot be used as an arena for politics to hurt and cause a rift among Muslims, or as hotels, guest houses or places of accommodation," he said in a press statement issued by his private secretary, Datuk Mohamad Munir Bani here.

He said mosques were places for Muslims to perform their prayers and to carry out religious activities.

The sultan also said speakers who gave talks at mosques or conducted religious classes should have credential letters issued by the authority. He said action could be taken against those who violated regulations or ignored or questioned the orders of the sultan as the head of Islam in the state.

The sultan also advised Muslims to unite. &ndash; Bernama, 17 October 2009

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No, Tuanku, mosques are not just houses of prayer. In fact, you don't need mosques if you wish to pray. You can pray anywhere. God, after all, is closer to you than your jugular, the Muslims believe. So God does not live in a house. God is in no need of a house.

During the time of Prophet Muhammad, mosques were multifunctional 'community centres'. Mosques were where people congregated and met to discuss current issues, exchange the latest news, and thrashed out what needed to be thrashed out.

I suppose Blogs and the Internet have now taken over the role that mosques used to play 1,500 years ago. Today, people 'meet' in cyberspace to exchange ideas, disseminate news, and debate issues. In those days the mosques were what the cyberworld is today.

Whenever there were disagreements and conflicts, people met in mosques to argue their cases. Whenever someone felt an injustice has been done, they met in mosques to seek justice.

Oh, and mosques were certainly places for politics, back in the days of Prophet Muhammad. Wars were planned in mosques. Strategies were laid out in mosques. Armies assembled in mosques before they went to war.

That was the role a mosque played when the idea of mosques was first mooted. It was not just a place to pray to God. Probably only 1% of the time spent in a mosque was for prayer. The other 99% of the time was to sort out whatever problems the community then was facing.

And on that part you said that only 'registered' or 'licenced' preachers can talk about religion, Tuanku, that too is wrong. It

was reported that one day Abu Bakar (or was it Omar?) was patrolling the streets and he saw this young man preaching. He summoned the young man over and asked him to recite the verse, Fatihah. The young man did flawlessly and Abu Bakar (or Omar) told the young man to continue preaching but to confine himself to what he knows and not more than that.

So you see, Tuanku, everyone is a preacher. In fact, it is the duty of every Muslim to teach Muslims and non-Muslims alike about Islam. No one is 'licenced' or has the monopoly on Islam. And it is your duty, an obligation, to teach Islam to those who wish to know more about Islam. And it is utter bullshit that the religious department decides on who can and cannot teach Islam or that they control the mosques and decide what can and cannot be done in mosques.