



"This controversy does not make sense or bring any good," said AMP chairman Azmoon Ahmad (right), seen here with Mr Nizam Ismail last year. Mr Nizam resigned as a board director and chairman of AMP's research arm last week.

BERITA HARIAN FILE PHOTO

# AMP will resolve controversy, says chairman

He holds meeting to discuss allegations by director who resigned

Maryam Mokhtar

Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP) chairman Azmoon Ahmad held a meeting on Friday night to discuss the allegations raised by lawyer and civil society activist Nizam Ismail, who left the group last Monday.

Mr Nizam, 46, had said that he resigned as a board director and chairman of the association's research arm because the Government had threatened to cut AMP's funding after taking issue with his comments online and his participation in two political events.

His comments were rebutted by Mr Azmoon and Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs Yaacob Ibrahim, who said that the Government did not interfere with the management of the association.

"It is not the aim of AMP to give the impression that we are arguing," said Mr Azmoon in an interview with Malay-language daily Berita Harian published yesterday. "The more we argue among ourselves, it will only give the impression to our community that we are not united."

"But the bigger issue is whether we can sit at the same table and, should differences arise, solve them in an amicable manner... instead of just attacking one another."

Berita Harian described Mr Azmoon as emotional and close to tears when discussing the issue. He had just returned from a work trip to China on Friday night, and gone straight to AMP for the meeting.

He was quoted as saying that the issue should have been resolved amicably. "You can pick up a phone and discuss it. 'Hey, I have a few concerns, are you aware of these concerns?' Why can't we sit down at a table and discuss it instead of attacking one another. To me, this controversy does not make sense or bring any good."

He added that the AMP will resolve to put an end to the issue "so that it will not cause a split or harm the Malay/Muslim community", and would give an update on the situation in a day or two.

He declined to comment when contacted yesterday by The Sunday Times.

The saga started after Mr Nizam asserted last week that the AMP leadership had informed him that two ministers had "expressed concern" over some critical views he had put forth online, and his participation in the two events.

He declined to name the two ministers but said the AMP presented him with two options: Tone down his civil society activities or dissociate himself from the association.

Mr Azmoon however said on Tuesday that Mr Nizam had decided to resign "to avoid further misperception" that he reflected AMP's official stand on political and civil society issues.

The two political events in question were the Population White Paper protest at Speakers' Corner in February when Mr Nizam was a speaker, and a forum on race issues organised by the Workers' Party Youth Wing last month when he was on the panel.

Mr Nizam, who was the chairman of AMP from 2009 to 2011 and the founding president of Young AMP, told The Sunday Times yesterday that it was "not my intention to put AMP in a bad light", and explained that he announced his departure only to clarify the circumstances surrounding his resignation.

A Facebook group called Nizam Ismail Fights for Malay Rights was set up on Thursday. Mr Nizam said that he was not involved in setting up or administering the page.

He graduated from the National University of Singapore's law school in 1991 on a Public Service Commission Local Merit Scholarship. He is a former deputy public prosecutor and a former deputy director at the Monetary Authority of Singapore.

Last September, he took issue with former minister of state Halimah Yacob's National Day Rally speech, saying it suggested that the reason the Malay-Muslim community has not succeeded "as much as we can is because we did not work hard".