

AMP 'committed to serving Malay-Muslims'

By ANDREA ONG

THE Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP) yesterday issued a statement that it hopes will bring closure to a controversy sparked by the resignation of former board director Nizam Ismail last week.

In the statement, AMP said it remains committed to its aim of serving the Malay-Muslim community. It intends to continue reaching out to the community and working with all parties which support its aspiration to build a "dynamic Muslim community".

AMP chairman Azmoon Ahmad said he called a board meeting last Friday where the nine directors present agreed unanimously on AMP's next course of action. "We must have closure

and we want to move on and... stay focused on what we want to do."

In its 21 years, the self-help group has benefited more than 275,000 people from all walks of life, it said in its statement.

It is piloting a debt advisory centre, an idea raised at its convention last year.

AMP also said in its statement that it "continues to be guided by its core principles of being independent, non-partisan and working in collaboration with all parties that identify with and support its aspiration to build a dynamic Muslim community".

The controversy began on Tuesday last week when Mr Nizam announced his resignation as chairman of AMP's research arm

and AMP board director.

He said he was informed by AMP that two ministers had taken issue with some online comments he made and that he had spoken at the Population White Paper protest in February and a Workers' Party youth wing forum in March.

He said he spoke in his personal capacity at both events but was told the Government would cut

funding for AMP if he did not "tone down".

Mr Azmoon and Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs Yaacob Ibrahim rebutted his claims, saying that the Government did not interfere with the management of AMP.

Dr Yaacob also said that government money given to Malay-Muslim organisations must be for voluntary work to

help the community, not for "creating a platform for people to be involved in partisan politics".

The episode has sparked debate on where to draw the line between involvement in non-governmental organisations and being partisan, both online and in an exchange of Straits Times Forum letters between the president of human rights group Maruah, Ms Braema Mathi, and the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth.

Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC MP Zainal Sapari yesterday welcomed the statement from AMP. He said: "I do not doubt that they have and always will be committed in looking for ways to help the Malay community move forward."

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