

Jamil Khir: Okay for non-Muslims to recite Quran
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Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Jamil Khir Baharom today asserted the right of non-Muslims to recite Quranic verses, provided they do so without ill-intent and with sincerity.

"It is not wrong if they want to learn or know more about Islam. The religion does not forbid that. But they must be sincere," said Jamil Khir (right) in answer to an oral question from Ibrahim Ali (Independent- Pasir Mas).

However, he warned that the government will take serious steps to protect the position of Islam as the religion of the federation, as outlined in the constitution.

"One cannot casually come up with their own translation of the Al-Quran without consultation and discussion."

He related that the National Fatwa Council has ruled in December last year that the actions of non-Muslims who read and translate the holy text using their own understanding without sincerity and honesty is considered an act that besmirches (Islam and the Quran) and may cause doubts and slander in society, and thus must be stopped immediately.

"Anyone who created disharmony or, hurt the feelings of other, can be prosecuted under section 298 of the Penal Code."

Jamil Khir was answering Ibrahim's question on whether the government would look into instituting a specific law to prevent non-Muslims from reciting the Quran and denigrating Islamic rituals like the call for prayer (Azan) and religious celebrations.

In a supplementary question, Ibrahim (left) then pushed the government further for a specific law to deal with non-Muslims who recite the Quran and disrespect Islam.

"The government says it is serious and there are laws to respond to this, but I see no rigour in government enforcements against such acts."

To this, Jamil Khir responded that the existing laws and provisions on the matter are already sufficient to address any abuses of the holy Islamic text and reminded everyone that a police report is needed before any investigation or prosecution can occur.

However, he said that as proof of the government's seriousness in the matter, there were already a number of cases where non-Muslim individuals had been prosecuted for the offense of reciting the Quran with misleading intent.

Asked by Putatan MP Marcus Majigoh about the official government opinion on the recent banning of the poco-poco dance by the Perak mufti, Jamil Khir said that the states have jurisdiction over religious matters.

"It remains under the authority of each state. We have 14 states and 14 muftis, each in charge in their own states, and as such the view in Perak (is that poco-poco is forbidden). That (fatwa) does not reach all the way to Putatan, only in Perak," said Jamil Khir.

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