

No change in Pakatan stance on use of 'Allah'

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By Hafiz Yatim

While he respects the views of the PAS Syura Council on the use of 'Allah' by non-Muslims, Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim said today there is no change in Pakatan Rakyat's stance on the issue.

Anwar said a reading of PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang's statement could be taken to mean that Islam does not prohibit the use of 'Allah' by non-Muslims, but that there is concern over abuse of the word.

"I have read the Syura Council's statement and that of the PAS president. We support their statements and concerns... I am bound by the views of Islam in the matter.

"I also acknowledge there is concern over abuse (of the word). Mainstream media reports are directed to create confusion among the Muslim public, with reports of people distributing copies of the (Malay-language) Bible to Muslim (school)children. If this is true, then investigate and charge (those involved)," Anwar said.

"However, our stand (in Pakatan) is clear. We do not condone the derogation of other religions. We will support and defend the sanctity of Islam and also of other religions, as this is not only required of Muslims, but is also protected by the federal constitution."

Anwar was asked to comment on the PAS Syura Council's decision earlier this month that Allah cannot be used in non-Islamic texts.

To this, he said there are other more pressing issues, such as fighting corruption, crime, rape, injustice and slander, which the people should focus on.

He also said the 'Allah' issue should not be politicised.

Anwar noted the different interpretations on the use of 'Allah' in books written by Islamic theologian Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qardhawi and others, but stressed everyone must understand the context of its use by those of other faiths in Malaysia.

"I do not want this issue to be politicised further as there are other issues which the people should be focused on," he said.

'Abdication of people's trust'

Anwar recited the surah Al Fatihah, which states: 'Allah is the lord of the whole world'.

He said this is an opinion held by Islamic scholars and hence, there should be no protest or

uncertainty over such polemics.

He also condemned Malay rights group Perkasa for its call to burn the Malay-language Bible, which contains the word 'Allah'.

"This could be a political ploy to create distrust and tension among those of various religions. I also condemn Najib (Abdul Razak) for not taking the effort to reassure the people that this is being done. If there is truth to allegations of Christians spreading their religion in schools to Muslim children, then take them to court.

"We should not be condoning the burning of holy books and I condemn such actions (although I am a Muslim)."

Anwar also said Najib's silence on Perkasa's call shows the failure of BN governance.

"His complete silence is an abdication of the responsibility that is entrusted by the people and reflects his weak leadership.

"Let us be serious. This (threat of burning) is totally unnecessary. It is to stir up, and deflect (attention from), issues that are plaguing the people."

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