

Minister: Courts will decide on non-Muslim use of 'Allah'

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By Nigel Aw

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Joseph Kurup said the federal government will leave it up to the courts to decide on whether non-Muslim can use the word 'Allah' or not.

"This is now before the courts, so let the courts decide," he told journalists after the attending the Malaysian Consultative Council on Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) 30th anniversary dinner in Kuala Lumpur last night.

bn supreme council mt meeting sapp sabah issue 190608 joseph kurupKurup was responding to a query on whether the federal government will allow non-Muslims to use the word 'Allah' based on the 10-point solution endorsed by the cabinet in 2011.

Shortly before the Sarawak state election, the cabinet had agreed to the guidelines which allowed the free use of bibles containing the word 'Allah' in Sabah and Sarawak while Peninsula required a stamp "For Christians only" and a cross on the cover of the bibles.

However, debate was sparked again last month when Kedah Menteri Besar Mukhriz Mahathir declared that non-Muslims in his state are not allowed to use the word 'Allah'.

Several non-Muslim religious groups, including MCCBCHST, have condemned the apparent renewed ban and called on the federal government to uphold the guidelines set out in 2011.

When pressed if the federal government will stand by the 10-point solution in light of the conflicting stance of various state governments, Kurup reiterated that the matter will be decided by the courts.

'Interfaith mechanism'

The High Court on Dec 31, 2009 declared the Home Ministry's ban against Christian publication The Herald from using the word 'Allah' as unconstitutional.

The government had since appealed the decision and the Court of Appeal will later

this month hear the Catholic Church's bid to strike out the appeal.

herald court case 050508On a related matter, when asked whether an interfaith commission would ever be set up Kurup said a similar mechanism already exists.

"It is not a commission, but there is already a cabinet-level committee with the same terms of reference (as the proposed commission)," he said.

Former Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had in a recent interview lamented that he faced difficulty in pushing through an interfaith commission due to misunderstanding by religious leaders.

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