

## **Don't break word on use of 'Allah', Najib told**

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**By Susan Loone**

A Penang BN leader has reminded Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak of his promise to allow non-Muslims to use the word 'Allah' based on the 10-point solution endorsed by his cabinet in 2011.

"If Najib breaks his promises, can he be trusted again?" asked state Gerakan human rights and legal bureau chief Baljit Singh (left) told Malaysiakini.

"Najib is respected as being a man of his word. It is time he shows that he deserves this respect."

As the Umno election draws near, he said, it appears that the leaders are competing to play the role of "protectors" of race and religion.

Such issues, played up during the 13th general election campaign, should have died down after May 5, when the nation renewed the mandate for the BN to rule the country.

azlan"However the issue was kept alive and has intensified after Kedah Menteri Besar Muhkriz Mahathir (left) declared that non-Muslims in his state are not allowed to use the word 'Allah'," said Baljit.

Following the statement, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Joseph Kurup said the federal government would leave it to the court to decide on the use of the word by non-Muslims.

The Court of Appeal has set Aug 22 to hear Roman Catholic Archbishop Murphy Pakiam's application to strike out the government appeal over the use of the word Allah in the Malay-language Bible.

'Is God on trial?'

However, Baljit likened the move to let the court make a decision, as an attempt to put "God on trial".

azlan"How can you bring God to court?" he asked, expressing disappointment that the controversy has yet to end.

"God should not be dragged into court or into politics. We will be the laughing stock of the world if this happens.

"The state should not interfere because (belief in) God is a very personal thing. Let the men of cloth (religious leaders) and not those in coats (judges) decide on this matter."

The legal tussle started when the Kuala Lumpur High Court on Dec 31, 2009 declared the Home Ministry's ban on the use of 'Allah' in Christian publication The Herald was unconstitutional.

The government is appealing the decision.

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