

'BN kingmakers in Borneo not flexing their muscles'

MalaysiaKini.com

Aug 28, 2013

By Nigel Aw

INTERVIEW As the government continues to push its ban on non-Muslims using the word 'Allah' which will mostly impact East Malaysians, members of the cabinet from Sabah and Sarawak have been surprisingly silent on the matter.

This reluctance to speak up, not only on the 'Allah' matter but also on other issues concerning East Malaysia, is symptomatic of the fear on the part of BN MPs from Sabah and Sarawak to flex their muscles, says veteran Sabah politician Jeffrey Gapani Kitingan.

NONE Jeffrey, who leads an East Malaysian-centric movement as the leader of the State Reform Party (Star), said this fear appears to have persisted despite Sabah and Sarawak representatives sealing their second term as kingmakers in the federal government.

They hold one-fourth or 33 of the 133 Parliament seats won by the BN and now make up one-third of the federal cabinet, with 12 of the 33 ministers coming from Sabah and Sarawak.

With the number of seats won by BN and Pakatan Rakyat in the peninsula remaining at status quo in the 2013 general election, East Malaysia is increasingly becoming the battleground for federal power.

"I don't think they realise that they have the power - that they are kingmakers, and this is the irony.

"The minds of the current Sabah and Sarawak MPs in the BN are locked inside a box and they are unable to see what I see," Jeffrey told Malaysiakini last week, in an interview in Kota Kinabalu.

Jeffrey, who is now Bingkor state assemblyperson, is the only representative not aligned to either BN or Pakatan to have won a seat in Sabah in the May 5 general election.

Oil wealth siphoned

"They (East Malaysian ministers) should be consistent. If the cabinet had made a decision, they should stick to it," he said in reference to the 'Allah' controversy.

NONEThe High Court in 2010 ruled that the Home Ministry's ban on the use of the word 'Allah' in non-Muslim publications was unconstitutional. The government has however appealed this decision.

At the same time, the government also came out a 10-point solution allowing the word 'Allah' to be used in the Malay-language Bible, the Alkitab, without restriction in Sabah and Sarawak, while those in the peninsula will have to be stamped with the words "Christian Publication".

Last Thursday, the Court of Appeal rejected Catholic Archbishop Murphy Pakiam's bid to strike out the government's appeal against the High Court decision.

Jeffrey warned that if the East Malaysian representatives in the government did not speak up to address the injustices in Sabah and Sarawak, the separatist movement in the two states would gain more traction.

According to him, the fact that the federal government took 95 percent of the oil wealth from the two states was a major point of contention.

"You can already see that there is a movement towards separation... Eventually, Sabah and Sarawak will separate from Malaysia. Is that what they want?" Jeffrey asked.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/239526>