

## **Karpal: PM must assure Sikhs' freedom of religion**

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As the prolonged debate over the use of the word 'Allah' rages on, DAP's Bukit Gelugor MP Karpal Singh has asked Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak to clarify what this means to the Sikh community.

Karpal (left), a Sikh himself, said that this is because the state enactments which bar the use of the word 'Allah' by non-Muslims has far-reaching implications on the Sikh community in the country, which also uses the word in their holy book.

"I call upon the Prime Minister, Najib (Abdul) Razak, to forthwith clear the air to ensure Sikhs in the country are not denied their constitutional right to practice their religion in peace and harmony," he said.

Karpal was responding to a statement by Selangor executive councilor in charge of Islamic affairs Sallehen Mukhyi that the Selangor enactment barring the use of the word 'Allah' by non-Muslims also applies to Sikhs.

The Selangor sultan had also decreed that the word is exclusive to Muslims and that religious authorities should enforce this.

Sultan's decree 'misconceived'

However, Karpal said the decree is "misconceived" and that the constitutionality of the prohibition can be challenged in court.

"In my view, the constitutionality of the prohibition... is certainly open to challenge in a court of law having regards to the guarantee of freedom of religion to all persons in the country under Articles 3(1), 11(1) and 12(3) of the federal constitution," he said in a statement.

Article 3(1) states that Islam is the religion of the federation but other religions "may be practiced in peace and harmony in any part of the federation".

Article 11(1) states that every person has the right to profess and practice their religion subject to state law and federal law for federal territories, to control propagation to Muslims.

Article 12(3) states that no one should receive instruction to take part in an act of worship other than their own.

The Selangor Non-Islamic Religions (Control of Propagation Among Muslims) Enactment, however, bars Muslims from using 34 words and phrases, including 'Allah, whether or not there is propagation involved.

Similar prohibitions also exist in other states in Malaysia except for Penang, Sabah, Sarawak and the Federal Territories.

The Malaysian Gurdwara Council has declined to comment on the matter.

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