

**Gov't siding with bigots on 'Allah' ban, says Anwar**  
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Anwar Ibrahim has expressed his disagreement with the Federal Court's decision to uphold a ban on the term 'Allah' being used by a Catholic publication.

In an interview with Australian network ABC, the opposition leader accused the authorities of bowing to pressure from racists and religious bigots.

Responding to a question on the ban and if it contributed to the erosion of tolerance, Anwar noted that the case is only peculiar to Malaysia.

"The ban is only in Malaysia. No other Muslim country has done this, to my knowledge. In fact, if you speak Arabic, the terms 'Insha-Allah' (God willing) and 'Alhamdulillah' (praise be to God) are commonly used. It (the term 'Allah') is also used in Indonesia," he added.

The concerns which led to the ban, he noted, were claims of proselytisation of Muslims by Christians.

"But I don't believe this is the right decision because there is no evidence or compelling case to support the contention that 'Allah' cannot be used (by non-Muslims).

"What is happening now is a divide, there is a growing tension and a growing sort of a complicity on the part of the authorities to support some of the racists and religious bigots claiming to have monopoly over the word 'Allah', showing insensitivity, and even in fact, intolerance to the practices of the minorities, including people of the Christian faith," he added.

Anwar also dismissed the accusation that he is running down the Malaysian government abroad for political mileage.

The opposition leader described this as "statecraft of any authoritarian or semi authoritarian regime", where critics are deemed as being anti-national.

"What do I do when there are questions raised on the issue of 'Allah'?"

"I have consulted international Muslim scholars, my understanding of the Quran and religious tradition does not show any evidence to the contrary," he said.

On MH370, Anwar said he had raised pertinent questions regarding the radar and cargo manifest.

In the recent case involving a Malaysian diplomatic attache in New Zealand, the opposition leader said he merely cited a letter where the Malaysian government had asked for the charges to be withdrawn.

Noting that the Malaysian Foreign Ministry did not mention this, he asked: "What do you want me to do, be a an accomplice in the cover-up?"

During the interview, Anwar was also quizzed on his sodomy conviction, especially regarding his appeal.

"From the unraveling of events leading to the Court of Appeal decision, it is certainly very disconcerting because they have ignored all the rules and procedures and advanced the case.

"But I remain optimistic purely based on the facts of the law, there is no case against me.

"There are of course evidence of political intervention or instructions... But I think sanity will prevail because this issue is widely known..." he added.

However, Anwar did not discount the possibility of the five-year jail term imposed on him being extended.

"The prosecutor (Muhammad Shafee Abdullah), who is a leading supporter of the ruling party, made it quite clear that not only do they want to counter-appeal, but want a more severe sentence from 10 to 15 years," he added.