

DAP, MCA call on Hisham to rescind 'Allah' ban
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Both DAP and MCA called today for the ban on the use of 'Allah' in Christian publications to be rescinded given Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein had himself expressed "regrets" over the decision.

malaysiakini interview loh seng kok 061108 04 Loh Seng Kok (left), who is the MCA publicity bureau chief and the party's central committee member, said in a statement that forbidding "Allah" from being used in non-Muslims' publications has turned the matter into a divisive national issue, one that may become an Achilles' Heel for the BN.

By rescinding the ban, the home minister would earn the respect as a leader "who looks after rights and interests of all Malaysians, including protecting the constitutional rights of minorities."

The home minister would also be able to abate the tensions that have arisen over the issue, "which has already been politicized unnecessarily", said Loh.

hishammuddin hussein pc 210509 01 The Malaysian Insider yesterday reported Hishammuddin (right) as having said his predecessor - Syed Abdul Hamid Albar - should not have banned the word 'Allah' from being used by the Catholic Church and added that the decision will continue to haunt his ministry "for a very long time."

"In this ministry, it is a zero-sum game. We are [now] in an uncharted landscape which will haunt us for a very long time.

"We should have let the sleeping dogs lie. It was triggered by those that believed that the word 'Allah' should not be used in Sabah and Sarawak," Hishammuddin was reported to have said during the Fourth Annual Malaysian Student Leaders Summit.

Loh noted that it was not only Christians in Sabah and Sarawak who have used the term Allah, but the Hindus and Sikhs in their Veda and Guru Granth Sahib scriptures, respectively.

To only allow 'Allah' to be used by Christians only in East Malaysia "reeks of 1 country, 2 systems and negates the fact that about 100,000 native Sarawak and Sabah Christians are based on Peninsular Malaysia, he added.

"Moreover, Christian Orang Aslis on the peninsula also refer to God as "Allah", said Loh.

"Malaysia would also make it to the world news for all the wrong reasons if Indonesian Christians and Middle Eastern tourists like Palestinian, Arab or Lebanese Christians who also refer to God as "Allah" and are citizens of countries with a huge Muslim majority were to have any of their religious publications confiscated upon arrival at our airports or seaports."

MCA also urged the home minister to allow the importations of the Al-Kitab and other religious materials so long as the printed materials contain the words "Christian publication" and carry an image of the "cross."

'Take full responsibility'

Meanwhile, DAP veteran leader Lim Kit Siang called for the cabinet to decide afresh the appeal against the Kuala Lumpur High Court judgment on the Allah controversy given Hishammuddin's remarks.

teoh beng hock memorial night 160710 kit siang“With Hishammuddin's admission, the cabinet should do what it had failed to do these past six months after the (justice) Lau Bee Lan judgement in January, that is, take a policy decision that the home ministry should withdraw its appeal against the high court judgement allowing the Catholic Church to use the word "Allah" in the Bahasa Malaysia sections of its newspaper, The Herald, to demonstrate the government's seriousness and commitment to resolve the issue through inter-religious dialogue.”

Lim said this is the time for the cabinet to “take full responsibility” for the resolution of this controversy, especially as the original decision to file the appeal against the Lau judgment was made without reference to the cabinet.

“All cabinet ministers must be conscious of the principle of collective ministerial responsibility, as the appeal is not just the appeal of the Home Ministry but represents the appeal by the Barisan Nasional government and cabinet.

“With Hishammuddin's admission of the mistake by the former home minister in creating the "Allah" controversy, undermining Malaysia's multi-religious harmony, this is the time for the cabinet to revisit this issue to make a policy decision to drop the appeal or cabinet ministers would be failing in their individual and collective responsibility in continuing to drag out the controversy in allowing the appeal to remain in court, still unheard.”

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