

**MCA: Gag order yes, 'backing down' no
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A top MCA leader who urged the Home Ministry to rescind the ban on the use of the term "Allah" by non-Muslims, has acceded to the cabinet's gag-order on the topic.

However, MCA national deputy publicity chief Loh Seng Kok said this did not mean that the party was "backing down" on the issue.

NONEMet at a function in SMK Bandar Sunway today, Loh (left in photo) said the MCA still felt that a resolution to the issue must be found as soon as possible.

"We can agree not to play up the issue any more, but a solution must be expedited.

"That is what the MCA president meant (on Tuesday).

"It doesn't mean we are abandoning our stand," he said.

Asked if he meant that MCA still wanted the "Allah" ban rescinded, Loh skirted the question, saying the matter was still in the courts and the party therefore did not wish to interfere.

"The cabinet has left this to the courts and we must respect its decision. However, we are still hoping for a speedy decision," he said.

'Don't claim MCA-DPM rift'

On Monday, Loh had issued a statement urging Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein to rescind the ban, after the latter blamed his predecessor for the controversy.

muhyiddin yassin pc 170310The following day, Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin (right) ticked off the MCA for playing up the issue and accused the party of ganging up with the DAP.

Hours later, MCA was in damage control mode with its president Dr Chua Soi Lek denying that it was in cahoots with the DAP while stressing that it was merely conveying the concerns of the Christian community.

Chua also promised that his ministers would raise the issue during yesterday's the cabinet meeting. But the only announcement that followed was the gag order.

Commenting on this, Loh urged the press not to speculate on any rift between MCA and the deputy premier because this was not true.

"Today, we don't have to analyse the issue any further. Please. Muhyiddin has commented and we don't have to openly disagree with him.

Adding salt to wound

In a related development, DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang threw a challenge to MCA's four cabinet ministers and their other non-Muslim colleagues to state whether they agreed with the gag order.

"Malaysians had been told that the cabinet operates on the principle of consensus - which means that if there is one minister objecting, a decision on a new policy or measure would not be taken by the cabinet," said Lim.

sibu by election lim kit siangIf consensus was really practised, he said, had any of the four MCA cabinet

ministers spoken out against the gag order and had demanded a "speedy resolution", Muhyiddin would not have announced the order.

"The Umno stand on the 'Allah' row is untenable and exposes the mockery of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's 1Malaysia slogan and policy.

"Even Umno veteran Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah had criticised the Umno leadership for failing to provide leadership in the controversy," said Lim (left).

The former finance minister had previously said Umno was adopting a more "intolerant hardline position" on the issue as compared with PAS whose position was more "plural and moderate".

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