

**Guan Eng must heed Muslim authority on 'Allah'**  
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COMMENT Lim Guan Eng, who claims he aspires to follow in the footsteps of Caliph Umar Abdul Aziz, recently chided Chua Soi Lek on the latter's ignorance about the glories of Islam.

NONEAs Lim (right) is so knowledgeable on Islam, Malaysians would expect that he act as a bridge between the different communities. Thus his first order of priority must be to facilitate a fair and just resolution to the 'Allah' issue.

Malaysia's heads of Islam are the Agong and the Sultans. Therefore any leader emulating the Caliph Umar must pay heed to the determination of our esteemed sovereigns when seeking a solution to the 'Allah' impasse.

On Feb 12, the Conference of Rulers issued a statement on how Their Royal Highnesses were 'disappointed' (dukacita) with the translation of the word 'God' to 'Allah'.

The keeper of the royal seal said the consensus of the rulers was that if this issue was not urgently dealt with, it would pose a threat to the sanctity of Islam, and to peace and public order. The statement released by the office of the keeper of the royal seal also said the 'Allah' translation has caused confusion and dissatisfaction among the rakyat, especially those who are Muslim.

Earlier on Jan 8 in a statement issued by Istana Negara, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin said, "To ensure peace and harmony among the followers of different religions (in Malaysia), the meaning and reference to 'Allah' in the general context should conform to the description fixed by Islam because this practice has all this while been accepted by Malaysians of other faiths."

The meaning of 'Allah' in Islam is that 'God is one', and not trinitarian.

Laws of the land

Tuanku Mizan desires his loyal subjects to live in peace and harmony. His Majesty's words are reminiscent of the phrasing of Article 3 of the federal constitution which states, "Islam is the religion of the federation, but other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony in any part of the federation".

seremban church door burned 110110 02The civil unrest that followed both the Christian insistence on using 'Allah' and the High Court judgment in January this year, indicated that peace and harmony were jeopardised when this particular practice of Christianity - i.e. the matter of sharing 'Allah' - had impinged on Malay-Muslim sensitivities.

Hence those who admire the sagacity of Caliph Umar (like Lim does) must lend grave thought to whether the practice of Christianity (when incorporating the use of the term 'Allah') is being conducted in a manner conducive to national peace and harmony.

Tun Mohamed Suffian Hashim in his 'Introduction to the Constitution of Malaysia' wrote under the chapter on Islam, "In every Malay state there is a Religious Council to advise the Ruler on Muslim matters, in each of the states of Malacca and Penang there is also a separate Religious Council to advise the Yang di-Pertuan Agong on Muslim matters, and in each state in East Malaysia a separate Islamic Religious Council to advise the state government. All these councils have been established by state law."

The state religious councils such as Jais and Mais have determined it is inadvisable for Christians to use the word 'Allah'. Since the year 1980, a total of 10 states have authorised enactments on the Control and Restriction of the Propagation of Non-Islamic Religions. These include restrictions in the use of 25 Islamic words and expressions among non-Muslims.

## Religious leaders speak

There is a state mufti for each of the Malaysian states. On the 'Allah' issue, the mufti of Perak Harussani Zakaria said that whosoever (the Muslim) who allows a Christian to employ the name 'Allah' is condoning 'syirik' (committing the sin of polytheism) and may thus be deemed 'kufur' (an unbeliever).

pas muktamar 070609 harun din 02The same view was expressed by Harun Din (right), the deputy mursyidul am of PAS.

Mohd Tamyas Abd Wahid who is mufti of Selangor said, "By right, they (the Catholic Herald) ought to realise that the word 'Allah' should not be used by them as it is exclusive to Islam and refers to Tuhan yang maha esa."

If Lim, who wishes to emulate the governance style of Caliph Umar Abdul Aziz, were to consult the rest of the state muftis in the Islamic spirit of musyawarah, he will find that none of them are in favour of Christians translating God into 'Allah'.

The National Fatwa Council, a board on which all the state muftis sit, had reiterated in May 2008 their ban on non-Muslims using 'Allah' as well as three other terms - 'Kaabah', 'Baitullah' and 'solat'.

Jamil Khir Baharom Minister in the Prime Minister's Department in charge of Islamic affairs Jamil Khir Baharom (right) in a press statement on Jan 2 said that his ministry would bring the case against the Catholic Herald to the Court of Appeal in their quest to defend the sanctity of Islam. The sanctity of Islam would be tarnished if Allah were to be made the same as the God(s) of other religions.

Jakim director-general Wan Mohamad Sheikh Abdul Aziz in his press statement on Jan 4 said, "Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (Jakim) is of the opinion that Murphy Pakiam, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur, should exercise his wisdom in not using the lafaz Allah in any of his church's publications or other printed material."

Wan Mohamad noted that Allah does not beget and nor is He begotten.

'A holy religion'

The imam besar of Masjid Negara Syaikh Ismail Muhammad was quoted as saying, "The name of 'Allah' must not be taken in vain. This is because Islam is a holy religion; therefore stern action should be commenced against the Catholic Herald which has made a mockery of Islam".

Ikim director-general Syed Ali Tawfik Al-Attas asserted "the argument on the right to translate a common noun God using the proper noun 'Allah' crumbles (is unacceptable); it is only correct to translate God using 'Tuhan'.

"As far as the proper name Allah is concerned, it has absolutely no plural, reflecting the notion of the one and only God whose essence absolutely excludes the purport of consisting of three distinct co-eternal persons, whether in the imagination, in actuality, or in supposition."

Or to put it plainly, Allah cannot be Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

It is not only the above Muslim luminaries who object to Christians using 'Allah'. The Persatuan Ulama Malaysia and other Muslim bodies and Muslim NGOs are in opposition too. Likewise the sentiments of the Muslim grassroots.

The Facebook group 'Menentang penggunaan nama Allah oleh golongan bukan Islam' (Opposing the use of Allah's name by non-Muslims) has over 300,000 members. Perkasa, which got its impetus from the Allah flare-up, claims a membership of quarter of a million who are up in arms at what they consider disrespect shown to the name of Allah.

## Sermon on non-tolerance

On Jan 22, the millions of Muslims attending Friday congregational prayer heard a sermon titled 'Kafir Dzimmi dan Kafir Harbi' - note, a standard text is usually read out during the Friday prayers in all the mosques throughout the country.

Excerpts from the sermon (my translation from Bahasa Malaysia):

“According to Islamic religious law, there are basically two 'status' belonging to non-Muslims, that is Kafir Harbi and Kafir Dzimmi. Briefly Kafir Harbi refers to non-Muslims involved in war who kill Muslims in the conflict zones. ... Whereas Kafir Dzimmi refers to non-Muslims who reside in a Muslim country, hold citizenship, pay regular taxes and in return are given guarantees of peace by their Islamic ruler in accordance to an agreed treaty.

“The big question is whether the status of non-Muslims in our country should be classed as Kafir Harbi or Kafir Dzimmi. From the observation made by the pulpit, we find that the status of non-Muslims in this country is Dzimmi based on the principle that they adhere to and agree to 'bow' to (abide by) the social contract created under the federal constitution....

“According to the al-Quran, Muslims are required to have cordial and good relations with the Dzimmi as well as act justly towards them as long as they do not oppose or oppress Muslims or against the spread of Islam. ...

“Nonetheless, the pulpit reminds the congregation and the ummah that having good relations with the non-Muslims does not mean that we forget our responsibility to Islam. Islam has specified that in the matter of faith (iman) and piety (ibadat) there can be no compromise (tidak ada toleransi). ...

“The pulpit would like to remind the congregation that when we are pressured by certain parties to accede to their demands, we should hold fast to Islamic teachings so that we do not lose our bearings. Allah SWT commanded in Surah al-An'aam verse 153: 'Verily, this is my way leading straight: follow it; Follow not (other) paths: they will scatter you about from His path; Thus doth He command you, that ye may be righteous.'

“To end the sermon, the pulpit calls on the congregation and the ummah to be cautious with regard to agents of the Kafir Harbi and to never ever mortgage our faith, our self-worth/dignity (jati diri) as Muslims, and our integrity. We must have all these in order to be able to preserve the standing of Islam in this country.

'Say: Hai orang kafir! (O ye that reject faith), I worship not that which ye worship, Not will ye worship that which I worship, And I will not worship that which ye have been wont to worship, Nor will ye worship that which I worship. To you be your way, and to me mine.' (Surah Al-Kaafirun: 1-6)

(Note: For the complete text of the sermon in Bahasa visit <http://www.islam.gov.my/khutbahjakim> for the entry dated Jan 22)

## Defender of the faith

On Saturday, Lim had a little spat with Chua Soi Lek where the Penang chief minister urged the MCA president to learn more about the glorious history of Islamic civilisation and Islam's immeasurable contribution to mankind.

NONELim further challenged Chua (right) to pose serious questions on the 'Allah' controversy to Umno, MCA's partner in the ruling coalition. Lim said, “These (Allah) issues appear to be not a problem with Muslim countries, but it is a problem with Umno.”

Lim is patently mistaken in his summation that it is only Umno alone which has a “problem” with Christians using Allah. As can be assessed by the many strong statements collated above, a host of Muslim religious authorities are uneasy with, and opposed to Christians using the term 'Allah', especially when some Christians insist 'your Allah is my Allah too'.

In Christianity, there is the 'Hail Mary'; Mary is Mother of God. Jesus is the Son of God. Translated into Malay, it would be quite blasphemous – Maryam ialah ibu kepada Allah; Nabi Isa adalah anak Allah.

If Jesus was the son of Mary as well as the Son of God, one would naturally be led to think there is a conjugal relationship between Jesus' two parents: hence Mary is married to God. In the context of Allah, this is absolutely sacrilegious!

Lim derided Chua for failing to understand Islam adequately. Since Lim is clearly the one more intimate with Islam, there's no need to put Chua on the spot by daring the latter to confront Umno with questions.

After all, isn't the answer staring Lim in the face? So many revered religious personages have unequivocally made their stand clear. Lim must accord the same respect to their learned opinion as he does Islam.

Hence Muslims anticipate him doing the right thing, especially since Penang under Lim's able stewardship has adopted the state slogan 'Amar maaruf nahi mungkar' (enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong).

To the Muslims, it is wrong that Christians use 'Allah'. Therefore, if Lim wishes to persist with his claim of striding in the shoes of Caliph Umar, he must prove his credentials. He can do no less.

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