

**CPO: It may have been done by 'naughty kids'  
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A Muslim prayer hall was vandalised today, police said, in the first incident since a spate of assaults on places of worship earlier this year that heightened ethnic tensions.

Eleven churches and two Muslim prayer halls were pelted with Molotov cocktails, stones and paint in January, as a row raged over non-Muslims using the word "Allah" as a translation for "God".

In Monday's incident, red paint was hurled on to the wall and window of a new prayer hall in the central state of Negri Sembilan, state police chief Osman Salleh told AFP.

"We are still investigating the motive behind the incident," he said, adding that it may merely have been a case of vandalism by "naughty kids".

"It might not be religiously or politically linked. I want the people to remain calm and not to over-react to this," Osman said.

NONEOpposition lawmakers who visited the scene of incident condemned the attack, and said they hoped it did not cause problems in the area, which has a mix of Muslim Malays as well as ethnic Chinese and Indian minorities.

"We hope it will not create any tension among the communities. This is something that we are worried about," said state opposition chief Anthony Loke from the Democratic Action Party.

"We hope the attack can be contained immediately," Loke added.

Religion and language are sensitive issues in multiracial Malaysia, which was hit by deadly race riots in 1969.

Some 60 percent of the 28 million population are Muslim Malays, living alongside large ethnic Chinese and Indian communities.

Two Muslim brothers were earlier this month sentenced to five years in prison for firebombing a church in suburban Kuala Lumpur, which was the first targeted in the spate of attacks that shocked the nation in January.

The trouble broke out after a court overturned a ban on non-Muslim Malaysians using the term "Allah" for "God".

The government argued that the use of the word by Christians, who make up nine percent of the population, could cause confusion and encourage religious conversion, which is illegal for Malaysian Muslims.

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